

# Building Bridges to Literacy



The Twenty-Seventh Yearbook  
A Peer Reviewed Publication of  
The College Reading Association  
2005

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We would be remiss if we did not thank our families for their continued support during the long hours we worked on this volume.

PEL, MBS, JRD, and BAB

December, 2005

## INTRODUCTION

The theme of the College Reading Association 2004 annual conference in Delray Beach, Florida, was “Building Bridges: Reaching beyond Our Borders.” Since Jon Shapiro planned that conference, we suspect he wanted us all to be cognizant that The College of Reading Association is an *international* organization among other things. Certainly we need to “reach beyond our borders” of literacy beliefs and practices as well. CRA has always been a dynamic organization. Jon developed a theme and planned a conference that truly signifies how CRA goes “beyond.”

When we create a title for the Yearbook, we always try to maintain the spirit of the conference, particularly its theme. I really liked the idea of building bridges and scoured many resources looking for bridges that would look good on the cover. All the pictures of bridges I found were too serene—nice, but not exciting. When I contacted my son-in-law, a talented artist, I told him the title was “Building Bridges of Literacy.” I explained that we wanted something that showed how being literate can take readers places and that we really need a bridge showing action and adventure. You can see by the cover how well he interpreted that idea. That book bridge ought to lead readers to exciting places.

Like writing articles takes many revisions, so does designing the cover. At one point, I noticed Todd had changed the title to “Building Bridges *to* Literacy.” His explanation was that it seemed that “*to*” was more what we were trying to do. We want to take readers and writers to better places with better literacy skills. An early design had the bridge leading to a single rock. As a co-editor suggested, the bridge ought to lead to a better place than a rock. “It should go to a place readers want to go.” Now the bridge takes readers *beyond* a rock to wherever the reader wants to go.

When I considered the articles to be printed in this volume, “*to*” again seemed more appropriate than “*of*.” Our president, Wayne Linek, showed how mentoring can be two-way leading to growth and learning for both the mentee and the mentor. Our award winners showed us new ideas. Bill Muth showed us how prisoners use literacy to make life better during their incarceration. Susan Porter reworked literature discussion groups of the past for today’s literacy learners. Betty Sturtevant investigated the role of the literacy professional and hypothesized where this professional will go. The Teacher Education Division is right on that bridge to literacy and policy-making and thereby making a difference for all of us.

The next articles show how reflection and thinking outside the box will make a difference in preservice teacher education. Claudia McVicker took the literacy bridge challenge by taking her preservice teachers to an art museum for the whole semester. Students can take the bridge to improved

reading through writing if their teachers read the articles by Mayra Daniel and Sylvia Read. The next four articles give us various ways to improve literacy instruction. Finally, we leave the borders of the university classroom to explore what is possible through partnerships. With all these, we hope we have really reached beyond our borders by building many bridges *to* literacy.

This volume marks the final edition of the editorial team of Linder, Sampson, Dugan, and Brancato. Co-editing a Yearbook can be both a challenge and a delight. One of the challenges was transitioning from a paper submission mode to a totally electronic mode of dealing with submissions, reviews, and communications with authors. The College Reading Association Yearbook is now in the 21st century and prepared for the new challenges that lie ahead. We have worked with wonderful authors, competent reviewers, and expert keynoters. Along the way we have celebrated many things—the faces, the freedoms, and the powers of literacy. It seems fitting that we conclude this term with bridges leading us ever *to* and *beyond*. Many thanks go to all who helped us on this journey.

PEL, MBS, JRD, and BAB  
December, 2005

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PRESIDENTIAL  
ADDRESS

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# MENTORING READING COLLEAGUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PAVING THE PATH TO SUCCESS

## Presidential Address

Wayne M. Linek

Texas A&M University-Commerce

### Introduction

The College Reading Association (CRA) is known as a mentoring organization. It is one of the reasons I thoroughly enjoy being an active member. Although the focus of this speech is on mentoring your reading colleagues, I hope to provide insight and stimulate your thinking about mentoring in a variety of contexts. To accomplish my purpose, I'll begin my talk with my own mentoring experiences. Then I will speak about changes in the concept of mentoring. Next, I'll explain why I see mentoring as a balancing act. After that, I'll discuss the critical aspects of mentoring. Finally, I'll conclude with my view of mentoring as a two way street.



### My Background and Experiences

I've discovered over the years that many new faculty are hired who have received minimal mentoring during their doctoral studies. Until I made this discovery, I didn't realize how lucky I had been. When I decided to pursue full time doctoral studies at Kent State University, I was hired as a graduate assistant. I met with Joann Vacca, the department head, and was assigned to the team of Rich Vacca and Tim Rasinski as advisors. My first semester, I got to work for Joann, Rich, and Tim as a graduate assistant. Little did I know at the time that I had been given a gift. Not only were these professors highly respected and well known in the reading world, they also knew how to be

outstanding mentors. One of the first things they did when I arrived on campus was to introduce me to Nancy Padak. Luck was on my side when Nancy agreed to do an independent study during my second semester so that I could get up to speed on “Whole Language Philosophy.”

This team of four consummate professionals included me in their writing, research, and teaching as if I were already a colleague. I became a co-author with Rich, a co-researcher and presenter with Tim and Nancy, and an editorial assistant with Joann. All were exceptional and unique models of teaching, scholarly activity, and service who knew how to hold my feet to the fire when it was necessary. It is easy to see reflections of them in my work. When I advise students and help them realize the power of their own decision-making, Joann is there. When I respond to student writing and ask questions, Nancy is there. When I model strategies for students and provide choice in assignments, Rich is there. When I structure a doctoral seminar and make sure students see that I am only human, Tim is there. Sixteen years later, I still strive for the high standards I saw my mentors model.

I was also blessed with a variety of peer mentors during my doctoral studies and my first tenure track position. Although I cannot begin to mention all of my peer mentors, fellow doc students Betty Sturtevant and Olga Nelson worked with me on conducting research, preparing presentations, and learning how to write professionally. We spent lots of time figuring things out together. At Texas A&M-Commerce, Mary Beth Sampson, LaVerne Raine, Pat Linder and I have supported each other through grant work, teaching, developing programs, high stakes teacher testing, and a myriad of service responsibilities. These colleagues serve as friends, but also as “agitators” when it comes to designing research and collecting/analyzing data. We keep each other going in symbiotic peer mentoring relationships to scaffold our work.

Although my university mentoring team introduced me to CRA, I immediately received mentoring from CRA members. Although there are more than I can possibly mention, I will give a few examples. Estill Alexander served as a mentor when Betty Sturtevant and I first applied to be *CRA Yearbook (CRAYB)* editors—and again when I helped Estill with publication of the *CRA History*. Bill Henk, who chaired the publications committee, mentored the new *CRAYB* editors when Betty and I put together our first peer review board. Bob Rickelman mentored me as CRA President Elect when I didn’t have a clue about how to put together a conference. Suffice it to say, in my experience, CRA truly has been an organization of mentors.

Now I have the luxury of serving as a mentor to doctoral students and new colleagues. There are many here today that I’ve had the pleasure of guiding along the way. They have taught me as much if not more than I have taught them as we have collaboratively researched, presented, edited, and written. They serve as the wind beneath my wings and keep me stimulated and focused as I have become one of the “Old Codgers.”

I've reflected on my mentoring experiences, now I'd like you to take a minute and reflect on positive mentoring experiences you have either received or given as a reading professional. [Pause] Now think about what you had to learn "the hard way" when mentoring would have helped. [Pause] Now think about a situation where you served as a mentor and didn't feel particularly successful. What was that like? How could it have been different? [Pause] Before I talk about the balancing act one must engage in as a mentor and the critical aspects of mentoring, let's consider how the concept of mentoring has changed.

## Changes in the Concept of Mentoring

Mentors and mentoring are currently perceived as popular and powerful means for people to learn professional and personal skills. In fact, mentoring may be one of the oldest forms of teaching and influence. Popular literature attributes the origin of the term to the ancient Greek storyteller, Homer. In his story of the Trojan War, the King of Ithaca asks Mentor to take care of his son Telemachus while he goes to war. Yet African scholars note that mentors were common in Africa long before the civilization of the ancient Greeks. The modern concepts of mentors and mentoring most likely come from the work of Fenelon, an 18<sup>th</sup> century French writer and educator (Retrieved from: HtmlResAnchor <http://www.mentors.ca/mentor.html>).

Although the basic concept of mentoring is ancient, the formal definition of the word *mentor* has expanded in the past 30 years. For example, the 1970 unabridged *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language* does not include the word *mentee* and lists the following finite definition for the word *mentor*:

Mentor, *n.* [from *Mentor*, the friend and counselor of Odysseus and Telemachus.] a wise and faithful counselor.

On October 25, 2004 a Google search on the term *mentee* yielded 88,400 hits and the term *mentor* yielded 4,390,000 hits. These hits range from the homepage of the *National Mentoring Partnership* to advertisements for "breast augmentation" and "erectile dysfunction." Regardless of pop culture usage of these terms, most reading professionals can identify someone who has had a significant and positive influence on their lives. Typical mentors include professors, doctoral peers, and colleagues. Although one usually thinks of mentors as older or more experienced, a mentor can be anyone who serves as a role model, advisor, consultant, tutor, coach, or guide. The days of students sitting at the feet of the wise sage are gone. Our understandings of the social construction of knowledge, coupled with modern technology, provide opportunities for us to serve as mentors any time, anywhere. For example, although traditional mentoring can occur within doctoral programs, with students and



colleagues in our own institutions, and at conferences; modern mentoring can occur via technology such as email, list serves, chat rooms, or in any context where scholarly work, teaching, or professional service is the focus.

## Mentoring as a Balancing Act

Mentoring our reading colleagues is important because we want to keep the flow of knowledge going in our field. It is also important because we must develop scholars, teachers, and partners who recognize the potentials and pitfalls of teaching, research, and service.

Successful mentoring is not simple or easy, and countless false perceptions about mentoring exist because we have fantasies about the ideal mentor. Although reflecting on our personal experience is important, it is not enough as we may remember only bits and pieces that were designed to be helpful to us, but may not appropriately scaffold the learning of our colleagues. For example, a person who had good research and writing skills but was afraid of taking risks in presenting or submitting manuscripts for publication in their doctoral program may have experienced a mentor's nurturing and encouragement to enhance their self efficacy. Nurturing and encouragement are important, but they can also be problematic when used at the wrong time or for the wrong reason. Likewise, a person who was overconfident when they started their doctoral program may have experienced lots of hard questions or criticisms to mold their professional character. Once again, hard questions and criticism are important, but can be problematic when used at the wrong time or for the wrong reason.

The tightrope one walks as a mentor consists of processes that develop a relationship, scaffold learning, and empower students and colleagues to become independent and successful. But each mentee is different and there are many ways in which one can lose their balance when walking the mentoring tightrope.

## Critical Aspects of Mentoring

Critical aspects of mentoring include: listening, commiserating, nurturing, encouraging, scaffolding, asking hard questions, giving critical feedback, helping mentees learn how to deal with dissonance from a metacognitive perspective, recognizing opportunities and options, developing realistic expectations, and learning from our mentees. Let's examine some of these critical aspects.

A mentor must consciously listen to and commiserate with a colleague, but a mentor who focuses on nurturing rather than assessment of the situation and planning how to get past a barrier doesn't provide an opportunity for metacognitive empowerment. For example, sometimes friendly and well-

meaning researchers will listen to colleagues talk about how frustrating the research process is. Listening is important, but helping a less experienced researcher see that dissonance is typical when researching and writing—is equally important. The senior researcher who only nurtures and commiserates forgets the goal of mentoring while running the risk of increasing emotional turmoil without helping their colleague learn how to work through dissonance.

Likewise an experienced researcher who tells the junior researcher to “just suck it up” or “things will get better with time” also does a disservice by not helping the colleague understand that this type of dissonance is normal and gives no clue about how to monitor and self regulate. In this instance, a true mentor might listen, commiserate by sharing their own experience, help the colleague assess specifically what the source of the dissonance is, pull options from the mentee or give suggestions for dealing with the situation, then empower the mentee by having them decide on their own plan for resolving the situation. This process should help your colleague keep both short-term and long-term goals at a level of conscious awareness.

Remember that the purpose of mentoring is to help mentees become independent in the analysis and use of their knowledge, skills, and abilities. A mentee may not be able to engage in creative problem solving and make good professional decisions if the mentor does not hold high expectations, help them view expectations realistically, make criteria explicit, and provide critical feedback. Those mentors that mainly tell and give in to colleagues’ pleas of “Just tell me what to do” may be imparting knowledge, but they are not serving as mentors.

Thus, it is important that the mentor teaches the ideal, but makes explicit that *it is the ideal* when mentoring scholarly activity and teaching. Sharing one’s own failed attempts and taking the time to share thinking processes and procedural knowledge that lead to success helps colleagues develop a sense of self efficacy and perseverance.

If our goal is to model and teach only the ideal, our colleagues may walk away with distorted perceptions and set unrealistic expectations for themselves. This may result in newly hired faculty members trying to start their scholarly careers with extensive studies that require significant amounts of external funding. A junior researcher may give up on a study if their first or second grant proposal is not funded—or if their manuscript is rejected because they can’t meet their own unrealistic expectations. In fact, it has been my experience as an editor that some inexperienced writers are disappointed when they receive an adjudication of *revise and resubmit*—because they initially interpret it as disparagement rather than an opportunity to refine their writing for publication. The same is true for teaching, expecting to be perfect and liked by everyone is not a realistic expectation. And completing

detailed journal responses for every student every class period will leave little time for the service responsibilities that all good colleagues must share.

Mentors may give colleagues opportunities to collaborate on research projects. However, just having them help collect or analyze data doesn't give them the insight into how to create, implement, and carry their own literacy research through to publication. Consider pushing your mentees to understand the underlying thought processes at work, provide critical feedback, engage them in reflection, and discuss their reflections to help them learn how to become independent.

Mentors can help colleagues become independent by engaging them in the articulation of criteria for teaching, research, and writing. Having mentees self assess, then giving critical feedback on their self assessments and encouraging them to develop options to deal with a variety of situational barriers will help them develop conditional knowledge. In my experience, sharing criteria for grants or manuscripts I am reviewing, then discussing a completed review provides a good model for those who have not experienced reviewing or grant writing in their doctoral studies. After an initial sharing, I have my mentee complete a review for me and I critique the review. Then I encourage them to become reviewers for journals or conference proposals.

Junior colleagues are often initially overwhelmed by combined loads of teaching, research, and service. It is hard to hit the ground running with your research agenda if you have not taught higher education classes or have not carried service responsibilities in your doctoral program. In this case, we can help new colleagues by exploring research possibilities in what they are already doing and by getting things in the pipeline. For example, in higher education a junior faculty member often teaches education or reading classes that have a field component. This field component can be an opportunity to complete a case study or to have preservice teachers help collect data. This type of research provides data for publishable manuscripts and gives novice researchers the practice and experience necessary to become experts. Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research and data collection has begun, mentors can encourage colleagues to submit program proposals for research in progress. Having a proposal accepted for a national conference builds self-efficacy as a researcher and provides motivation to complete the study. The following year the completed research can be submitted for a paper presentation and a new study can be undertaken that can be submitted as research in progress. After completing a paper presentation, the manuscript can immediately be revised based on audience feedback and submitted for publication to get things into the pipeline. Once this basic process is internalized and new colleagues become more adept at teaching and juggling their load, the mentor can encourage them to plan more extensive research projects and write grant proposals.

Within our own institutions it is critical for senior faculty members to mentor new colleagues into the culture of the institution because newer employees are often unclear about the criteria for promotion and tenure and are therefore hesitant to say “No” whenever approached with an opportunity or assignment. This lack of clarity is due in part to the fact that criteria for promotion and tenure vary with the culture of the institution, and the culture of the institution changes as people in leadership positions change. For example, a primary investigator or program director may be faced with assigning extra service responsibilities or teaching loads in conjunction with a grant and may ask a junior faculty member to take on the responsibility to solve the immediate need. This solution, however, may create a long-term problem when junior faculty members are evaluated for merit, promotion, and tenure. Senior faculty can serve as good mentors by clearly articulating criteria for promotion dictated by the culture of an institution and by keeping these criteria in mind when making decisions about offering opportunities, making assignments, and giving advice.

Mentors can also periodically monitor mentoring partnerships and gain insight by having short discussions about the success of the mentoring that is occurring. For example, simply asking:

- What’s going well?
- What’s not going well?
- What do you need that you are not getting?

These questions open the door for mentees to talk about problems that they might not feel comfortable bringing up on their own. Mentee answers to these questions provide opportunities for encouragement and critical feedback. They also provide the context for confronting problems with hard questions if a new colleague is unable to identify what is not going well.

Another way for successful reading scholars to mentor junior faculty members is to help them understand that time must be consistently dedicated to research and writing—and imparting conditional knowledge about when it is okay to say, “No” to “opportunities.” For example, most higher education institutions want faculty members to procure external funding. When opportunities arise administrators may present them to junior faculty. However, if the culture of the institution is such that peer reviewed research publications are the main criteria for promotion and tenure, a mentor should help a junior faculty member understand that requests for proposals are opportunities, but not required for initial promotion and tenure. In this situation the mentor can help the mentee reflect and initially focus their energy on smaller research projects that will lead to publications—or figure out how to break up an extensive research project into multiple publications. Conversely, some institutions may require grant writing, publishing a book, tak-

ing on extra teaching assignments, or providing significant service to become the valued faculty member that receives tenure. So helping new colleagues understand the values of the institution and how to balance their load is crucial.

Finally, regardless of the stage of your career, look for a variety of mentors both within your institution and outside of your institution. CRA and other professional conferences are excellent places to meet mentors. At CRA we are all here to help each other, that's one of the benefits of belonging to this organization. You don't have to be a famous name to work on committees or form partnerships. However, you will work side by side with leaders in our field. Within your institution, it is important for junior faculty members to form a relationship with a senior faculty member who understands the culture. Yet, remember junior faculty can also serve as excellent mentors.

## Mentoring as a Two Way Street

I perceive mentoring as a reciprocal relationship. Whenever I assume the role of mentor, I also assume the role of learner. Thus, I am constantly learning new teaching strategies, becoming aware of new research that I haven't had time to read, and being intellectually stimulated in a way that gets me to look at issues in new ways.

The bottom line is that mentoring is a two way street that goes beyond simplistic individualized instruction and nurturing. A successful mentor understands that the relationship built between mentor and mentee is as important as the learning that takes place. This relationship is built on mutual respect, mutual trust, and ethical behavior. Once mutual respect and trust are established, the key to successful mentoring as a teaching/learning process is in the assessment with, transaction with, reflection with, and empowerment of both parties.

In closing, remember that as teachers many of us have nurturing and care giving personalities; so we have to be careful that mentoring does not become an "enabling" or "one-way" relationship with one person doing all the giving. But when we successfully balance caring and mutual respect with sharing responsibility and ethical behavior, the result is a long-term collegial relationship that flourishes well beyond the initial period of mentoring.

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KEYNOTE  
ADDRESS

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# WRITING FROM THE HEART

## Keynote Address

Joyce Sweeney

*Joyce Sweeney is the author of 12 novels for young adults, the latest of which, **Takedown** (Sweeney, 2004) has been nominated by The American Library Association as a Best Book for Reluctant Readers. **Players** (Sweeney, 2000) was chosen as a Top 10 Sports Book for Teens by Booklist and as a Top 10 Book for Teens by Working Mother Magazine. Joyce is also a writing teacher and conducts an ongoing workshop in Fort Lauderdale, which has so far produced 11 published authors. She has published short stories and poems in numerous journals and anthologies.*

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I've done a lot of speaking but I've never been asked to be a keynote before. I want you to know I took that responsibility very seriously. I'm wearing pantyhose tonight!

It's a pleasure to be here with you, preaching to the choir. I gave a lot of thought to what would be good to talk about tonight. Actually I thought a lot about what wouldn't be good to talk about. I mean, yes we could talk about reaching out to teen readers by writing good books and how important and at risk those teen readers are, and how if we lose them in those years, we lose them forever . . . but I have a feeling you've heard that speech before. Actually, most of you have probably given that speech before.

So I thought tonight I would talk about something you don't know about, something you couldn't know about because it's personal to me. I want to talk about my personal creative process because I think it's fascinating how writers really work; it's a magical process to me and it amazes me that it produces

these useful objects—the books—that you teach and work with. A lot of authors don't tell the truth about what that process is like. They want to get up and say, "I felt kids should read a book about blah, blah, blah" and they act like it was an intentional thing they were in control of. I'm here to tell you it's not. It's a weird, unfathomable personal thing. These books just come up out of us, like . . . vomiting . . . and low and behold it's a useful, marketable thing. I have a good friend who's a therapist and she works with dreams a lot. And we've talked a lot about how storytelling and dreaming are extremely similar. When you dream, your unconscious puts together all sorts of scraps from things you've been thinking about and tells you a story that helps you or soothes you or expresses what you need to express. Writing stories is the same thing, only you do it consciously, or actually semi-consciously.

So to illustrate, I want to talk about the two books we have here, *Takedown* (Sweeney, 2004) and *Waiting for June* (Sweeney, 2003) and walk you through some of what was going on with me and how that all comes together to make a book.

Alright, before I start we have to get one big confession out of the way. I'm a pro-wrestling fan. I'm not a little fan; I'm a big fan. I go to arenas and I'm on the Internet. I've loved wrestling since I was five years old. I used to watch it with my grandfather and I got hooked when I was too young to do anything about it. So there it is, now you know the worst about me.

Okay, with *Takedown* (Sweeney, 2004), the genesis was Lionel Tate, do you remember who he was? It was all over the news down here. He was a thirteen-year-old boy who murdered a little girl and when he killed her, he was doing a wrestling throw. And then the media went into a frenzy that wrestling desensitizes kids to violence; it makes them violent, etc. etc. And as a wrestling fan, I knew this wasn't true and in fact, I knew there was some kind of positive, valuable aspect to wrestling. I didn't know what the heck it was, but I got it in my head that I could write a book that would somehow explore that.

So I was ruminating on that and I was out walking one day, and a sort of scary looking guy started walking kind of parallel to me. And I went through the usual thought process you go through . . . what will I do? Am I imagining this? Should I run? All the stuff you say to yourself when you feel threatened. I realized I had a key ring in my hand and I thought to myself, well, if he gets any closer, I'll close my fist over this key ring and hit him in the head with it. And I realized, hey! I got that from wrestling! If you hit someone with a foreign object, it makes your punch stronger! And I thought, well, that's nice, but I don't think that's enough to make a book. The guy ended up being harmless and I still didn't have an idea for my book.

But that event made me remember another event that had happened a few years back. I was riding on a bus with my mother and a guy stepped on



and he had a gun, very visible, in his waistband. And the driver said right away, "Get off!" I guess that's the training bus drivers get, to just yell "Get off" but anyway the guy didn't budge. And then a really interesting thing happened. About half the people on the bus jumped up, pushed past the guy with the gun and ran off the bus. And the other half, including me and my mom stayed where we were. Now it turned out alright, the driver must have signaled the police in some way because they came right away and dragged the guy off. But I was left with this thought . . . there was no way to know what was the right thing to do. The people that pushed past the guy might have guessed wrong. What if that made him mad and he just started shooting them one by one? Or what if we were wrong, to freeze and stay there? The others got away. We were still there in the dangerous situation. You like to think in every emergency, there's a right thing to do that will save you and a wrong thing to do that will hurt you. But I realized, you never know!

And the next thing that totally rattled me was Andrew Cunanan. He was the man accused of murdering Gianni Versace and for weeks he was on the loose down in Fort Lauderdale. He was on the run and desperate and he killed a guy to get his car.

That led to the media terrifying us by saying how clever and desperate he was, how he could pop up anywhere at any time, how ruthless he was. He was supposedly sighted in the area where I was teaching a night class every Thursday, and we'd go out to the parking lot and actually look around . . . is he here? Is that guy him?

So I started toying with the idea that maybe some kids who are wrestling fans run across this desperate gunman? Will there be anything of value in what they know from wrestling? Or will it have made them think violence is all a game and make them more vulnerable?

Then, there's always a little gift you get from the universe when you're planning a book. I went to the Mystery Writers conference and I was just there to mentor some of my students, so I could attend any seminar I wanted and just have fun. So they had a module that was given by an FBI agent who was on a Special Response Team . . . a SWAT team. And he started talking about hostage negotiations and what they do and how they handle it. And I was totally fascinated and realized if my crazed gunman got into a house and the police came right away, it could turn into a hostage situation. So I raised my hand and asked him, "Do you do things differently if there are kids in the house?" And he said, "Oh, yes, I would do a lot of things differently if there were kids." And so for the next 30 minutes I took over the whole question and answer period with him, ruining it for all the other people, plotting and researching my novel. And I got his card and called him later and asked some more questions.

I still didn't know what being wrestling fans had to do with it or how I was going to vindicate wrestling, but I had enough to start a book and writers know that you just trust the process once it gets going and let it take you. So I set up this story, where I have a thirteen-year-old boy who begs his mother to let him have friends over when she's not there and he finally gets her convinced that it's safe to do, and mean old me, I send the crazed gunman over there, the police come and the kids—all wrestling fans—are in a hostage situation. There were lots of surprises along the way, for one thing, several of the kids got out. I didn't expect that. It was like the bus story. One kid just made a run for it and it worked. And at one point in the story, my main character got the chance to get out and he *stayed*. He didn't want to leave his friends behind.

So he's plotting and planning and trying to get himself and his friends out and of course the whole situation is making him go crazy . . . and guess what he does? He turns to his wrestling hero in his mind. He calls on him and starts asking him for advice.

And then I had it. I understood why wrestling means so much to me and why I think it means so much to other kids. I grew up without a father. You're always sort of trained to say, it isn't a big deal, I'm fine, my mom does a great job. But you know something is missing. You want that big, larger than life, heroic man who always knows what to do, who role models being brave and strong, that protector. Look at the characters and storylines in wrestling. These guys are defending womanhood, sticking up for America, punishing cheaters and cowards—they are upholding exaggerated male values! And we need male values, all of us. In a dangerous situation, or in a time when we want to be ambitious and strong, we all need that "inner dad" to tell us what to do.

My wrestling hero is Ric Flair. I discovered Ric Flair at a time when my writing career was at an all-time low. Ric Flair is a larger than life, cocky, flashy guy who was a child prodigy and who clearly loves to perform. He wears sparkly clothes and he struts down that aisle with all the lights shining on him. People who want to be writers have that inner performer. Even though we're usually shy, we dream of walking that aisle, having the applause and the attention, being great. So I was feeling down and I'd watch Ric Flair and say to myself, "yeah, work it, baby!" But as I got to be more and more of a fan I learned a lot about Ric Flair, the real person. His career was a lot like my career. You get pushed and promoted, then maybe you get ignored for a while. You get applauded but you also get rejected and beat up and tired. His company got new management that didn't like him. That had happened to me! His company went bankrupt. That happened to me! And I learned from him, just by watching that he kept going, kept trying, just waited for the next opportunity. He started as a very shallow, silly role model but he turned into a true hero.

And I realized that all of us fatherless kids have to have someone like that—so when we're in a tough situation we can call on that image and say, what would he do? And that's what the main character in *Takedown* (Sweeney, 2004) does and that's what saves him.

And then, just before I move on to *Waiting for June* (Sweeney, 2003), one more thing. Remember when I said storytelling was like a dream? That it's some kind of unconscious metaphor for what's going on in your life? After it was written I realized why I was so interested in heroism and danger and life and death that year. It was a year when I had had some very weird medical symptoms and it led to me having repeated tests for cancer. I didn't have cancer and I'm fine, but being tested for it over and over was so scary, every time I had to wait for lab results. And I realized that was the gunman. Death can come to anyone's house and hold a gun on them, even mine. And that fear was what gave the energy to the story.

Okay, *Waiting for June* (Sweeney, 2003). Very different kind of book. The genesis of this book was just pure serendipity. I was teaching a writing class where I was giving prompts. And sometimes, you know, you write along with the class just to pass the time or see if the exercise is any good. And I gave the prompt: write about something that will never happen. And the wag that I am, since I had a tubal ligation when I was 26, I thought, I'll write about being pregnant. Because, believe me, that will never happen!

So I took the voice of a pregnant teenage girl and this is what I wrote:

I'm in my third trimester now, when dreams are supposed to be especially vivid. Lately, I've been dreaming bout whales, pale and bloated; drifting in a murky sea. They're always on the edge of my visual horizon, sometimes moving out of sight, which panics me. I don't know if I'm supposed to be human or another whale, left behind by the pod; but it seems important to catch up, and I never do.

The memorable part of this dream is the sound, the whale songs that rollover me in the water, so my body feels the sound and knows its shape. The whales cry in pulses, the most comforting sequence of beats imaginable. Not fast, like a heartbeat. Not even the pace of breathing. Slow, like the rhythm of someone stroking a cat.

Well, I don't know how many of you are writers, ladies and gentlemen, but when you accidentally write a passage that good, you're stuck with it. I remember showing it to my friend on the way home that night saying, I have to do something with this!

So then I say to myself. Oh, great, I have to figure out how to write a pregnant whale book!

Now obviously I need to figure out how to get the whales in here. I don't want to deal with the obvious, that she feels big or it's something about

sonograms or anything like that. So I started looking at it as something magical, some kind of magical message. I had read an article that stayed with me that said that in the third trimester, there may be some way that the baby can communicate feelings and even thoughts to the mother. I mean, obviously not word thoughts, but what about images and ideas? What about dreams?

I'm very interested in Native American religions and so I thought, well, what if the father of the baby is Native American and whales are sacred in his culture and so the baby knows this and is sending this to the mother? Well, I had a problem right away with that. I like to set my books locally, it just solves so many problems, but I thought oh, shoot, now I have to re-search the Pacific Northwest and find some Indians with whale totems and I hate doing research! So I was very annoyed but felt like I should take the assignment I was given.

Well, I'm right on the verge of doing that—and this is again where I find the process very magical—and there's this big article in the *Sun Sentinel* about the Tequesta Indians and how they were whale hunters and the whale was their tribal totem and on and on. It was such a gift! I didn't know there were whales off the coast of Florida! And I certainly didn't know they were important to the local Indians. And the article went on to say that the Tequesta didn't stay here, that most of them left and migrated to Cuba and that some Cubans secretly keep the Indian ways alive.

How perfect was that? Sophie's baby could have a Cuban father who doesn't even know his culture, maybe his parents know it but he doesn't know it and he passes it all on to the baby and she's communicating it to Sophie. And I felt this rush of excitement because this is something that I find so exciting, how a child can be the product of so many cultures coming together.

And I know why that is so exciting to me. All of my relatives on my father's side died young. So I never really had the opportunity to know them. And I always had a feeling, from some pictures of my father, and his mother, that there might be an African American ancestor there somewhere. And there were little things for me . . . things about my medical history, things about my hair . . . that would sort of bear that out. Well at one point I found a family history that had been written out by my great aunt, my grandmother's sister, and it said that their parents operated a flatboat on the Mississippi River . . . I know, you're already seeing scenes from *Showboat*, aren't you? But here was this weird footnote in the family history. It said that there was a black man who worked with my great grandparents, and that he saved my great grandmother from drowning and that he was an important friend of the family. My grandmother was the youngest child, born later than all the rest. She looked very different from her sisters. So all of this made me think, maybe my theory wasn't so crazy after all.

And I realized why I had set up my book the way I had, where the father of Sophie's baby is a mystery and Sophie's mother wants to keep her father's identity a mystery. Because all of us might be the product of who knows what powerful, magical culture and a baby is always a culmination of all these talents and gifts and abilities that might have come from anywhere.

What I've been trying to illustrate with all this is that if you want to connect with kids on the emotional level, you have to write on the emotional level. I wrote some novels when I was younger that came all from the head and they weren't that successful. You have to go into your fears and your fantasies and you have to use your heart and your gut to write a book that kids will respond to, because they know. They always know if you're faking or if you're insincere. So if you don't give them something that is soulful and meaningful for you, it won't resonate for them. That's what I've learned in these 20 years I've been writing—that when I really express myself, that's when I can make the connection.

Thank you.

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# LEARNING ABOUT LEARNERS: STRUGGLING READERS IN A FOURTH GRADE LITERATURE DISCUSSION GROUP

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## Abstract

*This qualitative study examined the participation of two struggling readers in a literature discussion group in a fourth grade classroom over a five-week period. The rationale for this study stems from the small amount of research that has focused specifically on struggling readers in literature discussion groups with their regular classroom peers. An analysis of the data revealed participation patterns for all six group members, including the two struggling readers, remained consistent throughout the discussion cycle. Each of the struggling readers maintained high levels of participation throughout the discussion cycle. The data analysis also revealed a strong connection between the writing and discussion components for the two struggling readers. The third theme that emerged from the data showed that the struggling readers were capable of participating as active, thoughtful readers in a literature discussion group. Their reading behaviors were similar to the behaviors commonly attributed to thoughtful readers.*

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Teachers in regular education classrooms are increasingly being called on to meet the literacy needs of all their students, including students who struggle with reading. One practice that has been explored for its potential for including all students in authentic reading experiences is literature discussion groups (Duffy-Hester, 1999; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). Literature discussion groups are small groups of students who meet to discuss a common text. In the discussions, the students build their comprehension by negotiating and constructing meaning of the text. Although studies have shown the benefits for all students of using a discussion format in the regular classroom, few studies have addressed specifically the participation

and opportunities afforded to readers of low reading ability in discussion groups (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Frank, Dixon, & Brandts, 2001; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995).

## Research Design and Questions

To explore how reading ability influences peer-led discussion groups, a group of six fourth-grade students was observed as they discussed the book *Black Star, Bright Dawn* by Scott O'Dell (1988) over a period of six weeks. Their discussions were audio and video taped. Each member was interviewed prior to the beginning of the book club cycle. Following each daily discussion, group members were interviewed, initially as a group then in pairs, for their perspectives on how the discussion went that day. The classroom teacher was also formally interviewed prior to the discussion cycle.

The broad goal of this study was to describe the participation of two struggling readers in a heterogeneous book discussion group. The specific research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do students participate in a heterogeneous student-led literature discussion group?
2. How does the writing component in the literature discussion format influence the discussion for struggling readers?
3. What is the nature of talk of struggling readers in student-led discussions?
4. In what ways do struggling readers construct meaning in a student-led discussion group?

## Literature Review

Several theoretical perspectives and earlier research guided this study. First, the theoretical perspectives of Lev Vygotsky (1978), Louise Rosenblatt (1976), and socioculturalists created the theoretical base. Vygotsky posited that learning takes place on two planes: first on the social (interpsychological) plane followed by the individual (intrapyschological) plane. In literature discussion groups, students have the opportunity to discuss a common text with their peers and build an understanding of the text socially. Then, each student is able to create their own meaning based on their interactions with their discussion group and their own background knowledge.

In her reader response theory, Rosenblatt (1976) differentiates between two stances a reader can take with a text: efferent and aesthetic. By taking an efferent stance, the reader is reading to study the text, rather than experience it. The aesthetic stance focuses on what the reader experiences during the reading event. The reader's thoughts and feelings as the text is being

read create a “lived through experience” (Carico, 2001; Speigel, 1998). Students have opportunities to take both stances during the reading and discussion in a literature discussion format.

The sociocultural perspective suggests that knowledge is constructed collaboratively through interactions with “more knowledgeable others.” “More knowledgeable others,” a term used by Vygotsky (1978), assist the process of meaning construction through modeling and scaffolding of students’ participation in discussions. Through interactions with more capable peers, students are able to accomplish more than they would be able to on their own (Almasi, 1996). In heterogeneous groups, students of different abilities are able to scaffold the learning of their peers by answering questions and clarifying misunderstandings regarding the text.

Courtney Cazden’s (1988) work on the patterns in classroom discourse has also helped to shape the basis for student-led discussion groups. In studying classroom talk, she found that the dominant discourse pattern in classrooms is the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) interaction. In her book, *Classroom Discourse*, Cazden explains four potential benefits of peer interaction in the classroom. First, discourse among peers can be a catalyst. Citing the research of Elice Forman, she stated that the pairs of students who worked collaboratively solved the most problems. A second benefit of peer interaction is called “discourse as the enactment of complementary roles” (p. 129). Forman’s work also showed that over time, students were able to successfully perform tasks together before either partner could complete the task alone. Cazden further writes that a third benefit of allowing more peer interaction in the classroom is that discourse can create relationships with an audience. Finally, Cazden emphasizes the benefit of discourse as exploratory talk. Exploratory talk strengthens class discussions and allows for different forms of learning to take place.

Based on the interaction, people assume roles for themselves and impose roles on others. Positioning is the notion that people situate themselves in relation to the other members of a group. A person may choose to accept the positions available or imposed upon him or he may challenge them. In the context of literature discussion groups, roles are negotiated throughout the cycle of discussions. These roles are influenced and shaped by a variety of factors including gender, power relationships, and status (Alvermann, 1995/1996; Evans, 2002; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995).

The literature discussion group format also pulls from the body of research on how to effectively teach struggling readers. Children in today’s classrooms represent a variety of cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds (Nieto, 1992). As the population of diverse learners increases in schools, regular classroom teachers are expected to assume the critical role of meeting the needs of all of their students, particularly in the area of read-



ing (Duffy-Hester, 1999; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995; Hauschildt & McMahon, 1996). Struggling readers, students who have difficulty with reading and are often below grade level in reading, are among the population of students with special learning needs that must be met in the regular education classroom.

In many schools, students with special reading needs receive pull-out reading instruction. This method of reading instruction is flawed for several reasons. First, many struggling readers do not qualify for compensatory services because of the lack of congruence in qualification criteria. Even for those students who do qualify for services, they still receive a majority of their reading instruction in their regular classrooms. The few effective compensatory reading programs available to those students who meet the criteria are designed to service only a small group of students for a designated amount of time. Struggling readers are then left, for the most part, to the reading instruction that their peers are receiving in their regular classrooms. Because of these realities, struggling readers need not only effective compensatory programs, but effective regular classroom instruction as well (Heibert & Taylor, 1991).

Literature discussion groups have been shown to be an effective practice for literacy instruction (Hauschildt & McMahon, 1996; Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Spiegel, 1998). Several researchers have formed specific models of literature discussion groups by combining some of the instructional choices such as text selection, discussion leadership, group size, and writing into a single format. Table 1 compares four literature discussion formats based on a variety of characteristics.

Many of literature discussion formats include an important writing component. Reading and writing are closely related literacy tasks (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). Atwell (1985) defines a literate environment as a place where reading and writing cannot be separated. Raphael, et al. (1992) found a clear link between the reading and writing components of Book Club. For struggling readers, often the first texts that they can read are their own writing (Merrill, 2000).

Writing in literature discussion groups can help all students, including struggling readers, become more confident, actively engaged readers (Gambrell, 1996; Spiegel, 1998; Wollmann-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1999). Reader response logs offer students a place to construct meaning and extend their understanding of texts over a longer period of time (McGee, 1992). For struggling readers, their writing gives them the opportunity to prepare for the discussions in advance and to act like experts for the group by using their log entries as entryways into the discussions (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Wollmanm-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1995; Spiegel, 1998). Research has also shown that using a variety of writing prompts designed to illicit differ-

Table 1. Models of Literature Discussion Groups

CHARACTERISTIC	BOOK CLUB (RAPHAEL & McMAHON, 1994)	GRAND CONVERSATIONS (EEDS & WELLS, 1989)	LITERATURE CIRCLES (DANIELS, 1994)	LITERATURE DISCUSSION GROUPS (ROUTMAN, 1994)
Group Size	3–5	4–8	4–6	6–8
Group Leadership	Student	Teacher participates as a group member	Student	Student
Text Choice	Teacher	Student	Student	
Assigned Roles	No	No	Yes	No
Group Choice	Teacher	Based on text selection	Student	
Grouping	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous
Writing	Response Logs	No	Role Sheets	Response Logs
Characteristic	Book Club (Raphael & McMahon, 1994)	Grand Conversations (Eeds & Wells, 1989)	Literature Circles (Daniels, 1994)	Literature Discussion Groups (Routman, 1994)
Group Size	3–5	4–8	4–6	6–8
Group Leadership	Student	Teacher participates as a group member	Student	Student
Text Choice	Teacher	Student	Student	
Assigned Roles	No	No	Yes	No
Group Choice	Teacher	Based on text selection	Student	
Grouping	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous
Writing	Response Logs	No	Role Sheets	Response Logs

ent comprehension strategies can enhance the quality and sophistication of the written responses over time (Furr, 2003; Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Reading-response logs can give struggling readers the opportunity to take risks with their reading and writing which can move them higher levels of thinking (Speigel, 1998).

Although many variations exist for structuring literature discussion groups in regular education classrooms, many researchers agree that this format for

literacy instruction has many benefits for all students. Students are able to take ownership in their learning through the interactions they have with their peers. Frank, Dixon, & Brandts (2001) found that the second graders in their study began to make connections between their lives and the texts as they shared and recommended books to each other. Goatley & Raphael (1992) concluded that students benefited from participating in instruction on how to discuss.

Another benefit of literature discussion groups is that together in their groups, students can construct an understanding of the texts that they may not have been able to do so on their own (Lewis, 2001). This idea is consistent with Vygotsky's theory of more capable peers (Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995). Eeds and Wells (1989) found that struggling readers were supported in their understanding of texts in their research on grand conversations with fifth and sixth graders. McGee (1992) found similar results in her work with first graders. Martinez and Roser (2001) conducted a review of research on children's responses to literature and found that student responses are best nurtured in social contexts. Leal (1993) studied literature discussion groups in the first, third, and fifth grades and concluded that the small discussion groups are a platform for not only peer collaboration, but peer tutoring as well.

Students who participate in literature discussion groups also benefit by being introduced to a wide range of text interpretations and learning new strategies for comprehending texts (Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003; Short & Kaufmann, 1995). Studies on literature discussion groups have found that students learn to use multiple sources of information when making a case for a certain text interpretation (Goatley, Brock, Raphael, 1995). An increase in vocabulary knowledge and use of personal connections to texts has also been found in studies (Bond, 2001; Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003).

Although this alternative format for reading instruction has a considerable research base in its favor and offers many benefits, it also has its drawbacks. First of all, the models of discussion groups found in journal articles and books rarely transfer perfectly into another classroom (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Maloch, 2002; Roller & Beed, 1994). Students do not intuitively know how and what to discuss. This lack of direction can lead to conversations that remain at the literal level or it can lead to off-task behavior (Hauschildt & McMahon, 1996). Allowing students to have control over their discussions can also lead to students marginalizing and dominating others in their group (Evans, 1996). Evans (2002) studied fifth graders' perceptions of how they experienced literature discussion groups and found that the gender makeup of the group and the presence of a bossy group member influenced student participation. The students often used gender to explain why their group was or was not working well and were quick to blame the other gender for

the difficulties. Students in mixed gender groups struggled to have productive discussions more than students in same gender groups. The fifth grade students reported that they preferred to be in same gender groups. The presence of a bossy group member who directed the group with commands or talked for longer periods of time also negatively influenced the group. The other students struggled with how to respond to a bossy group member and often would withdraw from the discussion and let the bossy member take control of the conversation. Alvermann (1995/1996) and Silvers (2001) also found gender to be an issue which influenced discussions. Teachers must be aware of the potential “hazards” that can occur in literature discussion groups (Carico, 2001).

## Study Participants and Research Design

This study took place in a fourth grade classroom at Rockdale Elementary School, a public school situated outside a mid-size metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. Ms. Oliver, a Caucasian female, has taught for 29 years, 10 of which have been at Rockdale. The six students who participated in this study represented a wide range of reading abilities and attitudes toward reading. The classroom teacher selected the six students based on their reading abilities, as indicated by formal (i.e. district mandated reading assessments, STAR, Informal Reading Inventory) and informal assessments required by the school district, and their personalities. Of the six students, five are Caucasian and one was adopted from China at the age of four. Two of the students qualify for special education services. The two focal students for this study are Chris and Savannah. Chris, a low average reader, stated in his initial interview that he did not like to read. Savannah receives pullout reading instruction and commented in her interview that she is a “slow learner.” According to the district’s assessments, Savannah reads below grade level.

Although Ms. Oliver had not used a formal book club format before, she was somewhat familiar with how they worked. Prior to the round of book clubs, which are the focus of this research, Ms. Oliver conducted a whole class book club. She focused on teaching the students how to discuss with one another and what they could talk about in their groups. She taught them about turn taking in a group and listening to each other’s ideas. She gave each student a reading log with a writing topic idea sheet and several blank pages for writing. Then, the class discussed the various ways to respond to their reading in their journals. At the conclusion of this round of discussions, Ms. Oliver introduced the new book and divided the students into small groups.

This study was conducted in four phases beginning in the fall 2002 and concluding in the summer 2003. Phase one began with identifying and gain-

ing access to the classroom that would serve as the setting for this research. All data collection took place during the second phase. The third phase of this research involved analyzing the data once the round of book clubs was completed and refining hypotheses into a more narrowed focus. Transcripts were written for the book club meetings and interviews. The fourth and final phase of this research project involved presenting my findings to the participants and writing the final report.

A variety of data collection methods were used to increase the trustworthiness of this research. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The book club discussions were recorded on both audio and video tape. Transcripts were written for five of the six discussions. The remaining discussion was indexed and portions of the discussion were transcribed. Students' reading logs were collected as artifacts at the end of the book club round. Field notes from each classroom observation and book club meeting were written and then typed.

The qualitative methods for analyzing the data collected in this study are closely related to the research questions. Multiple levels of analysis were used including constant comparison and frequency counts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Table 2 shows the methods of analysis used to answer each research question. The levels of participation for each student were calculated using two measures: number of turns at talk and average number of words per

Table 2. Research Questions and Analysis

QUESTION	ANALYSIS
1. How do students participate in a heterogeneous student-led literature discussion group?	Participation analysis: • Turns at talk • Words per turn
2. How does the writing component the literature discussion format influence the discussion for struggling readers?	Analyzed transcripts and field notes from 6 book club discussions for use of reading logs Analyzed reading logs for content
3. What is the nature of talk for struggling readers in student led discussions?	Analyzed transcripts and field notes from same book club discussions by coding comments according to category of talk then compared categories to literature on discussion groups
4. In what ways do struggling readers construct meaning in a student-led discussion group?	Analyzed transcripts and field notes from same book club discussions by coding for use of comprehension strategies and confirmed strategies with the comprehension literature

turn. The number of turns at talk for each group member for each discussion was counted. A turn at talk was defined as any instance in which a student's voice could be heard by the other group members. The second level of participation measured was the average number of words per turn for a typical discussion. The third group discussion was chosen for this analysis because it represented a typical discussion with all six group members present and took place half way through the book club cycle. To analyze the type of comments made by the struggling readers in the book club group, open coding procedures were used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Prominent patterns of participation for each struggling reader were identified and examples for each pattern were pulled from the transcripts.

The connection between the reading logs and the group discussion was analyzed by first categorizing the content of each struggling reader's reading log. Each of the two struggling readers responded in different ways in their reading logs. Chris's log was coded based on the format he used for each entry. Savannah's reading log was coded using the categories on the idea sheet given to the students by the teacher (Appendix A). Then, each transcript was reviewed for instances of talk based on reading log entries and connections were cross-referenced in both the transcripts and the reading logs.

To analyze the comprehension strategies the two struggling readers used during the discussions, transcripts were reviewed and instances of talk were coded for the use of a comprehension strategy. Then, the list of comprehension strategies generated from the transcripts was compared to the common body of literature on comprehension strategies.

Throughout the four phases of this study, several measures were taken to ensure the validity of this study. The prolonged engagement in the classroom and persistent observations of the students and teacher both in the classroom context and during the book club discussions has allowed me to present a rich description of how the two struggling readers participated in a book club group with their peers. Data for this study were collected from multiple sources (i.e., teacher, students, and myself) and a variety of data collection methods were used (i.e. interviews, observations, audio tapes, video tapes, and artifacts) allowing for the triangulation of sources. I maintained a field journal in which I recorded observational, methodological and theoretical notes.

## Results

Results will be discussed by referring to each research question. First, the overall group participation is discussed followed by a focus on the two struggling readers.

*Question 1—Student Participation*

Turns at Talk. The overall levels of participation for each group member remained consistent throughout the discussion cycle. A turn at talk was defined as any time a student's voice could be heard by the rest of the group. The numbers of turns at talk and the percentage of turn taking for each student are shown in Table 3. Rebecca maintained the highest number of turns at talk on the days she was present. Chris and Savannah, the two struggling readers, also maintained high levels of participation as indicated by the number of turns at talk for each day. The remaining three members of the group (Alison, Freddy, Jefferson) consistently had lower levels of participation throughout the discussion cycle as indicated by their fewer turns at talk. These patterns remained consistent for discussions with full membership and discussions with reduced membership.

Table 3. Turns at Talk for the Book Club Members

STUDENT	JANUARY 21	JANUARY 28	JANUARY 31	FEBRUARY 4	FEBRUARY 7	FEBRUARY 11
Alison	44 (11%)	48 (14%)	63 (14%)	34 (9%)	<i>Absent</i>	42 (21%)
Chris	84 (21%)	69 (20%)	62 (14%)	83 (22%)	102 (36%)	72 (34%)
Freddy	45 (11%)	25 (7%)	38 (8%)	32 (9%)	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Absent</i>
Jefferson	55 (14%)	26 (8%)	39 (9%)	28 (8%)	73 (21%)	32 (16%)
Rebecca	122 (30%)	100 (29%)	133 (30%)	106 (28%)	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Absent</i>
Savannah	53 (13%)	76 (22%)	115 (26%)	90 (24%)	112 (39%)	55 (27%)
Total Turns	403	344	450	373	287	201

Length of Turns. The average number of words per turn was another measure of participation. Table 4 shows the average length of turn for each student during a typical discussion. Rebecca had the highest average number of words per turn (12.68). Her high average of number of words per turn combined with her high number of turns at talk contributed to the perception that she was leading the discussions. Chris's high average number of words per turn (9.55) helped to label him as another leader of the group although he took fewer talks than Savannah. His longer comments typically contained detailed accounts of story events and gave the perception that he talked more. Savannah's low average number of words per turn (5.39) seemed to hide the high number of turns at talk she took. Her comments typically

showed agreement with another student's comment. Savannah was not identified as a leader in the group despite her high number of turns at talk. The other three group members consistently had lower average lengths of turns, with the exception of Freddy, who had an average of 84 words. Jefferson, who has the highest reading ability in the class according to the teacher, consistently spoke the least in terms of turns at talk and average length of turns.

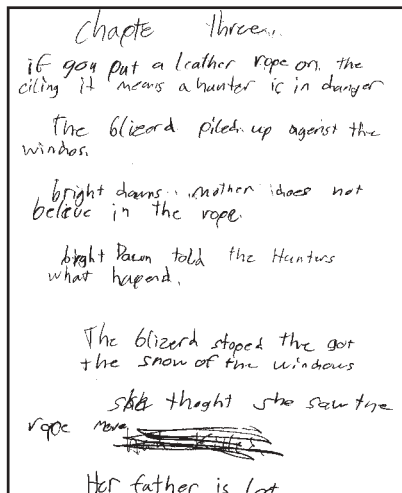
Table 4 . Average Length of Turn by Participant  
for January 31 Discussion

PARTICIPANT	TOTAL WORDS	TOTAL TURNS AT TALK	AVERAGE LENGTH OF TURN
Alison	371	63	5.89
Chris	592	62	9.55
Freddy	298	38	7.84
Jefferson	143	39	3.67
Rebecca	1687	133	12.68
Savannah	618	115	5.37

*Question 2—Reading and Writing Connection for Chris and Savannah*

Chris's log entries revealed an interest in recreating the story and remembering important story details. An example from Chris's journal is shown in Figure 1. He used his writing to recall character names and follow the story development. In the following example, Chris used his log to start the discussion.

Figure 1. Chris's Reading Log Entry for Chapter 3





C: Well, in chapter 2, they go out hunting and he just sits there waiting for the seal to pop up and it starts snowing and then Bright Dawn leaves with the dogs and tells everybody what happened and they put up this like rope thing on the ceiling and if it like falls, it means the hunter's dead

R: Well yeah-

His comments corresponded to his journal entry for chapter 3. His attempts at inferential and personal responses to the story were also helpful to the group by getting them to focus on personal reactions to a character and story events. Although some of his references to his reading log were not helpful to the group, overall, his reading log served as a meaningful support to his contribution the discussions.

Savannah chose to use a variety of response formats in her reading log, yet she used her entries in many of the same ways Chris used his entries on story development. Figure 2 shows the variety of formats Savannah used. Savannah used the idea sheet given to her by her teacher to experiment with different ways to respond to a text (Appendix A). Her entries went beyond a literal interpretation of the story to include more personal responses. She used her responses to initiate topics, shift topics, and clarify details for her group.

The following segment from the fourth meeting of the book club shows one instance of Savannah's use of her log.

R: Then in chapter 14, Black Star saw the wolf pack and stuff and BD thinks that was his dad

C: No, that wasn't in that chapter.

R: Yeah, chapter 14

S: No, ya'll are a chapter behind.

C: It was in like chapter

S: Because she was cold in chapter 13

C: [In chapter 15-]

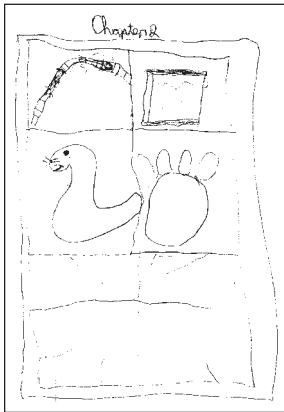
S: (reading from log) I WAS SHIVERING LIKE ICE, I mean, I WAS A SHEET OF ICE AND SHIVERING AND BLUE WITH COLD.

C: Yeah because in chapter 15 she got into the village where all those people were touching her as she went by and she got like the sandwiches from mom

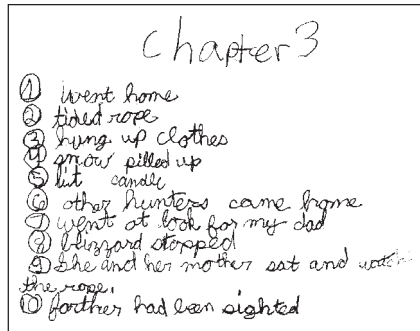
Savannah is able to use her log to clarify story events for the rest of the group. Most of her responses were helpful to her peers.

For both Chris and Savannah, their reading logs provided support for their participation in the group discussions. Chris's used his reading log to help the group recall character names and follow the story development. He also used his log entries to express personal reactions to story characters.

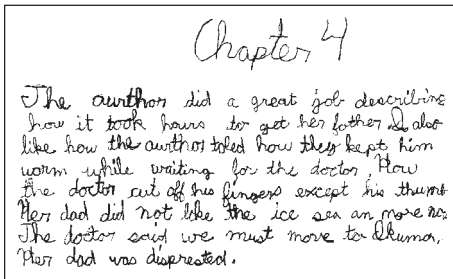
Figure 2. Savannah's Reading Log Entries



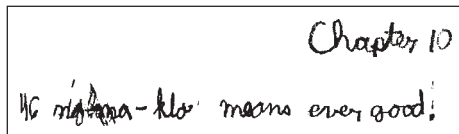
Character Map



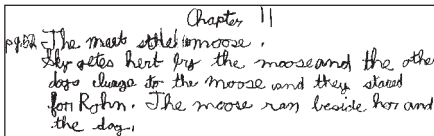
Sequence



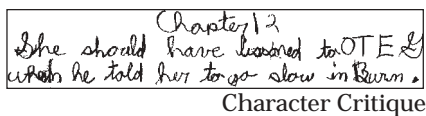
Author's Crafts and Special Tricks



Wonderful Words



Special Story Part



Character Critique

Savannah's entries were used to initiate discussion topics, shift the current discussion topic, and as evidence for clarifying details during the conversation. These findings support the body of research that says that writing is an important component of a literature discussion format (Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Speigel, 1998; Wollmann & Bonilla, 1995).

### *Question 3—Nature of Talk for Struggling Readers*

Chris's attention to the story events and details was his most common contribution to the group discussions. He used his knowledge of the story events to ensure that the group followed the sequence of the story, to fill in story details and to build upon other group members' retellings. The following segment illustrates one of Chris's attempts to maintain the sequence of events.

C: And, remember, she said that before she was getting on the boat, the ice had started to tilt. Cause she was, it started going like that (motions with his hands)

A: Yeah

J: And in chapter 19, [I wrote-]

A: [Oh yeah]

C: No, I'm still on chapter 18. I still have a part to talk about. (S hits C on the shoulder) The boat came to the island and urn her mom was glad to see her and all and this girl in a pink dress and something gave her food and said I hope you win.

His attention to the development of the story also served to position Chris as a story expert. During the last discussion, Alison turned to Chris for acknowledgement that what she was saying about the story was true.

C: He brought her in and gave her some like fried reindeer or something

A: And he told her to stay, right?

C: Yeah

A: But she said like where-, I think the guy like meant to take the sign out, well get buried or something. And she went back to try to find it and put it in the right way

C: Yeah

Alison's deferment to Chris in the second line of this segment is evidence of how the group viewed Chris's role. By emphasizing the importance of recreating the story, Chris was able to contribute to the group's overall understanding of the book.

Savannah's most common form of response in the group discussions was the "I wonder" statement. She used this response format to pose questions to the group, share topics of interest, shift the conversation, and to elicit

other group member's personal responses to the story. The following example presents Savannah using the "I wonder" statement to ask a question to the group.

S: I wonder if he had like some sort of instinct that told him to follow the wolves.

R: It was his father. It was his father.

F: Yeah, it was his father.

C: Yeah she says-

S: No, XXX (speak or thought)

C: In 14 she saw the wolves again and she figured out that Black Star had the same face as a, like a wolf and-

R: Yeah he looked exactly alike

C: So she figured out that that was his son then Black Star came back.

At first, her "I wonder" comment appeared to be an instance of Savannah wondering aloud to the group. However, the group responded as though Savannah had a question. In another example, Savannah uses an "I wonder" statement to elicit other group member's reactions.

S: [The one thing] I wonder is how it would feel to lose someone in your family like your brother.

C: I know

A: Yeah

S: someone who's so close to you.

C: And it just kinda like told you that his brother's dead

S: Yeah

Her use of the "I wonder" statements was helpful in getting the group to think beyond the story.

#### *Question 4—Strategies for Meaning Construction by Struggling Readers*

Both Chris and Savannah used strategies such as questioning, making connections, predicting, visualizing, and monitoring his/her comprehension to make meaning not only for him or her self, but for the group as a whole. For example, in the following segment from the second group discussion, Chris asks a question concerning a detail in the story.

C: It's from that one place to Nome. What's that one place?

S: Nome

R: Argentina

F: Anchorage, not Argentina

Chris brought up the path of the Iditarod race and couldn't remember where the race started. To fill in the missing piece of information, he asked a question to his peers. Savannah chose to make connections between her life and the story to gain a deeper understanding of the text. In the following ex-

ample, Savannah compared her experiences with her dog to Black Star, a dog in the story.

S: I kinda wondered something like a dog can sense when something's wrong

C: Oh yeah like the [ice or something]

S: [Cause my dog] stays near me when I fall or something, she won't move

A: Yeah

In another example, Chris and Savannah both discuss how they visualize the story.

C: I don't think about I am imagining it. I just see. Like "oh, I am imagining this." I just see it.

R: It's like you are looking out your window and it's like oh look there she is.

C: It's like you see it without trying to see it.

S: Yeah

R: It's like a dream.

C: Yeah, like you're looking, it's like you're just reading in the book and you can see it in your mind. And you think you see it, but you're just seeing it in your mind.

R: You can close your eyes and see it.

S: Well what I do, what works for me is I read it right before I go to bed-

R: Me, too.

S: and that night I can imagine what I read.

Each student used a variety of strategies including questioning, making connections, predicting, summarizing, and visualizing. They also demonstrated the ability to monitor their own understanding of the text. These examples illustrate how Chris and Savannah were purposeful in their use of strategies.

## Conclusions

One of the broad goals of this study was to investigate how struggling readers participated in a literature discussion group and to explore whether or not their participation was beneficial in meaning construction for themselves as well as the other group members. The findings from this study suggest that struggling readers can and do act like thoughtful readers in a literature discussion group (Table 5). Each student participated at a level that was related to his or her individual interests and personality rather than reading ability. The group discussion offered opportunities for each student to assume the role of a more knowledgeable other regardless of ability.

Table 5. Comprehension Strategies

WHAT THOUGHTFUL READERS DO	WHAT CHRIS AND SAVANNAH DID
Ask questions (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991)	Both asked questions for clarification
Make connections (Bloomer & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Lanski, 1998; Short, 1992)	Chris connected the story to his teacher; Savannah connected the story to her own experiences
Make predictions (Pressley et al., 1992)	Chris made his own predictions about what might happen next; Savannah asked the group to predict what happened after the story ended
Visualize story events (Gambrell & Bales, 1986; Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003)	Both drew pictures of story characters and events in their reading logs; both discussed how they imagined the story
Monitor their understanding (Duffy, Roehler, & Herrmann, 1988; Pressley, 2000)	Chris was able to recognize when a word didn't make sense as he was reading aloud; Chris also was able to comment on what he had just read

The findings of this study support the call for including students with lower reading abilities in contexts with their more capable peers. The literature discussion group was a beneficial context for Chris to use his comprehension and leadership skills. Chris demonstrated a keen understanding of the story and helped his peers in building an understanding of the book. He consistently participated at a high level throughout the discussion cycle, using his reading log as a support for his oral comments.

The literature discussion group was also a valuable context for Savannah. The book club offered her opportunities to read literature for a real purpose and a chance to move beyond the idea of reading as decoding. She used the book club discussions as a platform for building an understanding of the story on both the literal and inferential levels. Her comments often helped to move the group conversation to higher, more complex levels of thinking.

Throughout the discussion cycle, Chris and Savannah acted like thoughtful readers. They assumed the role of more knowledgeable others for their peers, a role not often afforded to struggling readers. They also felt comfortable taking risks by expressing their opinions, questioning the story or author, and reading aloud from a challenging text. These behaviors are evidence of the potential for literature discussion groups to be a valuable context for struggling readers.

## Implications

The findings of this study offer several implications for classroom practices. First, struggling readers can and do participate in literature discussion groups in ways similar to their peers. All readers, including struggling readers, need opportunities to interact with their peers in authentic literacy tasks (Gambrell, 1996). Ability grouping and pullout programs often do not provide opportunities for struggling readers to show how they think about texts and create meaning (Duffy-Hester, 1999; Lou et.al., 1996). By closely examining the talk that takes place in a literature discussion group, teachers can learn more about the strengths of their students as readers.

Second, the literature discussion group offers readers of all abilities the opportunity to construct a meaning of the text over a longer period of time. Since book clubs are divided into cycles, more time is allowed for discussion and building meaning since the cycle does not end until the group has finished reading the book. This format contrasts with the "story-a-week" plan of many classroom reading programs.

Third, the writing component incorporated into the discussion cycle was purposeful and provided support for all of the group members. The students were allowed to choose a response format that matched their needs. They chose formats that would help them recall story events, thoughts, and feelings as they read. In this group, the type of response, whether it was a paragraph or a picture, served to support the participation of the students. This finding is similar to that of Goatley, et. al (1995) who found that the writing the diverse learners did during their book club cycle created learning experiences for the group. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Martinez, et.al. (1992) who found that using response logs enhanced group discussions.

Another implication this study has for future classroom practice involves group size. The group in this study was designed to include two students from each of the reading ability levels (high, average, low). Since the purpose of this study was to focus on the participation of struggling readers in a cross-ability group, the group size was at the high end of the group size normally suggested by research (Daniels, 1994; Eeds & Wells, 1989). However, the last two discussions had groups with a reduced number present due to the illness of some members. The participation levels, particularly for those students who tended to participate at lower levels, remained constant in the groups with reduced membership. However, the low level participants had more opportunities to talk, suggesting the possibility that a smaller group may result in higher levels of participation for all students. This is a question should be addressed in future research on literature discussion groups.

This study not only confirms the research of others such as Goatley, et. al. (1995), Martinez, et. al. (1992), and Gambrell (1996), it goes beyond to show the importance of heterogenous grouping to transform the literacy

practices of students perceived as struggling. Hypotheses generated by this study to be tested in future studies bring to the forefront the power of enabling contexts for enhancing student's own literacy resources.

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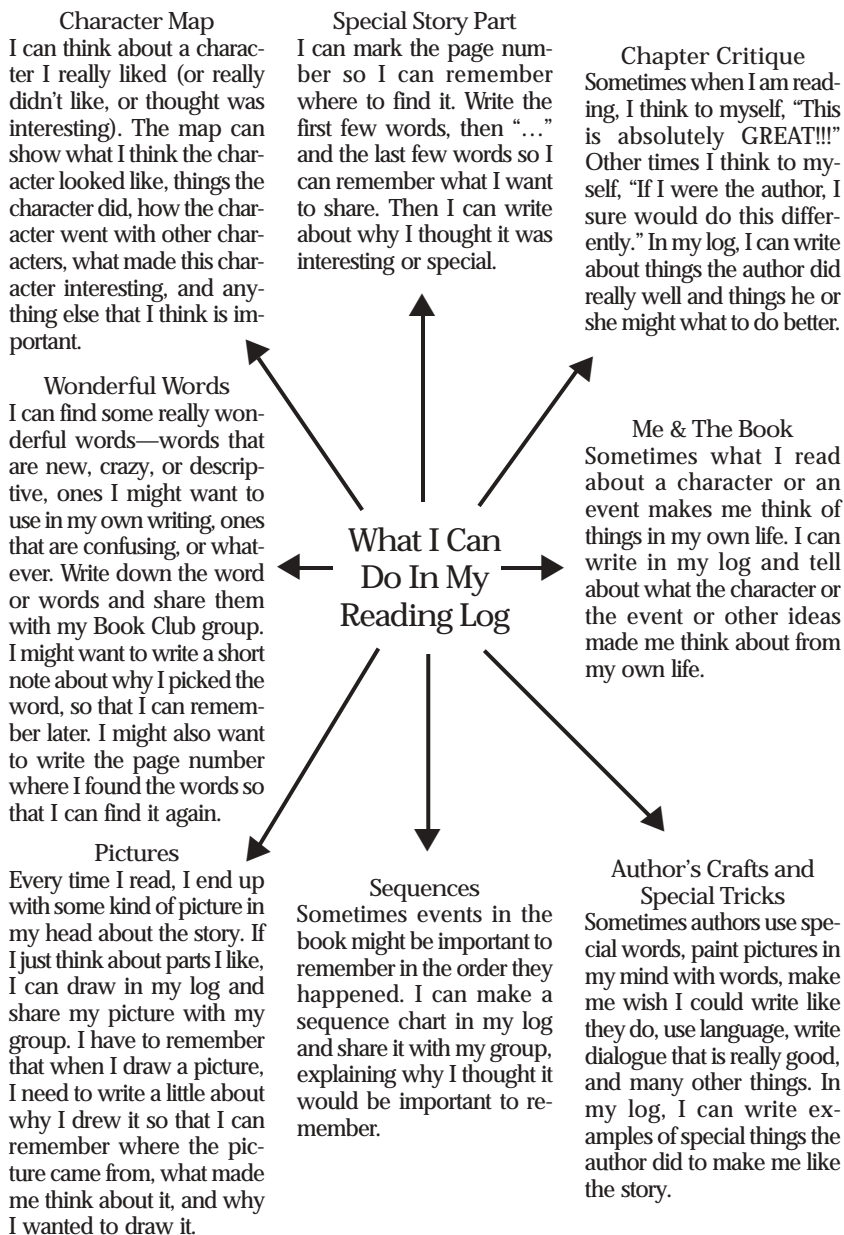
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## Appendix A: "What can I do in my reading log" sheet



## Appendix B: Interview Questions

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### Initial Student Interview Protocol

- How do you feel about reading?
- How would you describe yourself as a reader?
- What did you think about the book club with *Mr. Popper's Penguins*?  
What did you like?  
What did you not like?  
How well did you participate?
- How do you think it will be different with a small group?

### Final Student Interview Protocol

#### *Book Club Experience*

- What do you think about your book club experience?
- What did you like?
- What did you not like?

#### *Group*

- What did your group do well?
- What did your group *not* do so well?
- Do you think your experience would have been different with a different group?
- If you got to pick your group, who would be in it and why?

#### *Book*

- What did you think about the book?
- Do you think you would have read this book on your own?

#### *Individual Experience*

- How would you rate your performance as a member of your group?
- What did you do well?
- What could you do better?

#### *Overall Evaluation*

- Would you like to do another book club?
  - How would you do the book club differently?
  - What should I tell people in my paper about doing book clubs?
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# BUILDING BRIDGES TO POLICY AND CHANGE

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# THE ROLE OF THE LITERACY PROFESSIONAL IN THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CURRENT POLICY ISSUES

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## Abstract

*The role of the literacy professional in the middle and high school has been explored very little in the research literature. Currently, within the United States there is greatly increased interest in literacy for adolescent learners as well as increased funding for literacy professionals in secondary schools. This paper provides a brief history of adolescent literacy issues with a focus on the role of the literacy professional. In addition, current policy concerns are discussed and two program examples are provided.*

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While it is widely accepted in the literacy community that students in grades 6-12 benefit from continuing literacy support in order to read, write, think critically, succeed in advanced coursework, and develop the multiple literacies they need to achieve personal goals (e.g., Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore & Alvermann, 2006; Vacca & Vacca, 2005), funding and public interest in supporting adolescents' literacy development has been uneven over the last century. The preparation, roles, and expectations of reading professionals who work with adolescents have also varied, and individuals working in these roles have often felt like islands, without sufficient connections or support (e.g., Darwin, 2002). This paper provides a brief history of adolescent literacy issues with a focus on the role of the literacy professional in programs for adolescents. In addition, current policy concerns and potential solutions are discussed.

## Historical Perspective

Interest in adolescent literacy has been traced to at least the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Moore, Readence, and Rickelman (1983), in an historical overview of content area reading, reported that as early as the 1920s reading educators advocated that content area teachers in secondary schools teach their students strategies for comprehending textbooks. Educators of that period (like many current teachers) found that children often had difficulty transitioning from the narrative texts used in the early grades to the expository texts typical of content area textbooks in secondary schools. Secondary school content area teachers were seen as being in a unique position to provide reading assistance in combination with advanced course content.

Although literacy educators advocated an emphasis on content reading during this time period, it is unknown if recommended practices were used in classrooms because comprehensive studies of secondary teachers' reading practices before the 1980s are not available. However, there is some evidence that very few teachers or school administrators heeded calls to provide more emphasis on reading at the secondary level. Barry (1997), for example, in an historical comparison of principals' reports on high school reading programs in the 1990s versus those in the 1940s, noted that while in both time periods secondary teachers were encouraged by university professors to be "teachers of reading," neither group had the additional "time, money, training or support to do so" (p. 530).

In the 1970s and 1980s, research related to secondary literacy increased, as federal funds were allocated for researchers to study comprehension processes and develop reading strategies appropriate for content area classrooms. In addition, textbooks and professional development materials for teachers and university courses had become more widely available by this time. By the mid-1980s, government policy provided an additional force behind the emphasis on secondary reading as most states required that beginning middle and high school teachers take a course in content area reading for certification. While taking one course in reading is arguably a very limited introduction that university students may eschew (e.g., Stewart & O'Brien, 1989), the requirement seems indicative of at least some appreciation of the reading needs of adolescents by state legislatures and university faculty.

During approximately the same time period, reading specialists, or teachers with special certification in reading, were hired in some junior highs and high schools across the United States, often with federal funds. A recent retrospective interview study of early secondary reading specialists revealed that many worked with students who needed special assistance; some also provided advice and support for content teachers who wished to help their students in reading. Many secondary reading specialists also provided in-service training for groups of teachers, supervised literacy assessment programs,

and worked with volunteers and aides who tutored individual students. The effectiveness of reading specialists from this time period has not been studied on any wide basis. Only a small percentage of districts hired reading specialists at this level, and it appears that even very large schools generally only had one reading specialist. The increasing scarcity of funding of the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the downsizing or elimination of reading specialist positions in many states.

Since the late 1990s, however, reading specialists, sometimes identified specifically with a staff development role as well as a recently coined title, "literacy coach," have begun to reappear in positions in middle and high schools. In some cases, this emergence seems to have resulted from concern about middle and high school students' passing of high stakes tests and the low graduation rates of low income students and those with special needs. In addition, some foundation-funded projects have promoted or required the hiring of literacy coaches (Sturtevant, 2003). Furthermore, in the past two or three years, the interest of federal policy-makers seems to have been at an all time high. Several federal initiatives will be discussed in the next section.

## Policy and Adolescent Literacy

Educators and researchers who are working to improve adolescent literacy should attend to policy at the district, state, and federal levels because it can have a strong impact on practices in schools or individual classrooms. The role and preparation of the secondary school reading professional are two areas of specific concern. First, in different states, districts, and schools, secondary reading professionals may have assignments ranging from teaching a full schedule of large classes, to being in charge of the school testing program, to primarily providing staff development for teachers. Often the specific role varies enormously depending upon the decisions of state officials, individual principals, or the specialists themselves (Darwin, 2002). The preparation of teachers selected as "literacy coaches" often varies widely as well. Some states require literacy coaches to have master's degrees in reading or literacy, while others permit teachers with little preparation in literacy to become coaches (Hall, 2004). Adolescent literacy educators who work to influence policy must help insure that the role and preparation of the literacy professional for the secondary school makes sense, keeping in mind that these individuals are likely to be asked to provide instruction for students as well as professional development for teachers.

There have been recent developments on the federal level that could prove significant. For example, in February, 2004, President George W. Bush submitted to Congress a proposal for the *Striving Readers Program*, which



Congress later funded for \$24.8 million in 2005. This program makes competitive grants to school districts to fund reading programs for middle and high school students; these programs can include secondary literacy coaches (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Although this funding is far short of the \$100 million originally requested, as of this writing in July 2005, it appears that funding for FY 2006 will be increased over FY 2005 levels.

Additionally, two pieces of legislation with adolescent literacy components were introduced by members of Congress in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (2004). Although neither passed, they have subsequently been re-introduced in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005). These are (a) the Pathways for All Students to Succeed (PASS) Act (S. 921), which, if passed, will authorize \$1 billion for literacy coaches (as well as \$1 billion for math coaches) and (b) the Graduation for All Act (H.R. 547), which, if passed, will provide \$1 billion for literacy coaches and other assistance to students considered most at risk of dropping out of high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). While it is unknown at this point if either of these initiatives will be successful, they do appear indicative of a growing national recognition that attending to the needs of adolescent literacy learners is important. Further updates on United States federal legislation can be obtained from <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/bills/>.

## Examples of Implementation

The coaching role that is currently advocated (similar to the “resource” designation of the past) emphasizes the literacy professional’s ability to provide continuing staff development for content teachers and leadership for school programs. Two examples of implementation will be presented here. Many more, as well as resources to assist coaches, are available from the web sources listed in Figure 1.

The following examples are provided as illustrations of long-term projects that are providing literacy coaches for secondary schools. Together they demonstrate some of the ways district and/or state policies can support the implementation of recommended practices. The first is a statewide program that has provided literacy coaches at the secondary level in Alabama for more than six years. The second is a rural district in Virginia in which reading specialists having a coaching role have been recruited and supported in middle schools for more than 10 years. In both of these examples, literacy coaching is seen as part of a larger system of professional development and support for teachers. Continuous professional development is provided for the coaches as well as for teachers and school administrators.

Figure 1. A sample of websites providing information on secondary literacy coaches

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Alliance for Excellent Education:

[http://www.all4ed.org/adolescent\\_literacy/](http://www.all4ed.org/adolescent_literacy/)

Carnegie Corporation of New York:

<http://www.carnegie.org/reporter/09/literacy/index.html>

International Reading Association (IRA):

[http://www.reading.org/publications/reading\\_today/samples/RTY-0404-coaches.html](http://www.reading.org/publications/reading_today/samples/RTY-0404-coaches.html)

[http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/positions\\_coach.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/positions_coach.html)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

<http://www.ncte.org/collections/literacycoach>

National Education Organization (NEA)

<http://www.nea.org/teachexperience/rdk030227.html>

WestEd (Strategic Literacy Initiative):

<http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/179>

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#### *Example #1: The Alabama Reading Initiative*

The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), which began in 1998, is a state-wide K–12 initiative that includes voluntary participation by 132 middle schools and high schools throughout the state. According to state literature, the goal of ARI is to “significantly improve reading instruction and ultimately achieve 100% literacy among public school students.” This program has the goal of placing a literacy coach in every participating school. School faculties must vote (85 percent support is required) in order to join ARI. The Alabama Department of Education, in cooperation with colleges and universities in Alabama, provides ongoing training for participants, including literacy coaches, teachers, and school administrators. Funding sources have included the state, business partnerships, and local districts.

Literacy coaches in this project are recruited from both within and outside of the participating schools. While some coaches are already certified literacy specialists when they begin coaching, others work toward their certification after they are assigned to coaching positions and can apply some of their training hours toward course credit in university courses (M. Spor, personal communication, September 5, 2003). All coaches are expected to have an in-depth knowledge of literacy and writing processes as well as experience as teachers. The role of the literacy coach in ARI includes helping teachers learn new strategies. Coaches often model strategies in classrooms, work with teachers individually, and lead study groups. Coaches are also seen as an integral part of the school leadership team. Program staff

believe collaboration among teachers, principals and coaches, as well as the leadership from the state Department of Education are key to the program's success. In addition, professional development for coaches is considered "essential, required, and ongoing" (P. Duke, personal communication, September 5, 2003).

The ARI has been evaluated on a continuing basis since its inception. According to a report completed in 2001, "on average, ARI schools outperform schools not in the ARI" (Moscouitch, 2001). However, the same report notes that some ARI schools performed much better than others. Ten key factors are cited as present in the higher-achieving schools. Among these factors are that "the school has a full-time reading specialist with in-depth, hands-on reading instruction experience," that "teachers reinforce comprehension skills for all students, not only in the language block or in language classes, but throughout the school day and across the entire curriculum," and that the "principal is strongly committed to the reading initiative and knows how to provide educational leadership in the school." Putting these supports in place takes a strong effort throughout the school and also financial and administrative support from the district and state.

#### *Example #2: Stafford County Public Schools, Virginia*

The Stafford County Public Schools in Virginia are located in a rural area about 40 miles from Washington, D.C. This district has experienced tremendous recent growth in population, and has increased by more than 1000 students per year over the past five years. For over 10 years, the district's language arts supervisor, Dr. Nancy Guth, has lead an effort to place reading specialists who have a coaching role in schools at the secondary level. Currently, all six middle schools have a full-time, state-certified reading specialist, who serves as a coach for teachers and teacher teams. A high school literacy coach/reading specialist also serves the high schools in the district. Dr. Guth explains that these professionals are responsible for "modeling strategies, team teaching, meeting with teams of teachers" and other duties (N. Guth, personal communication, September 3, 2003).

Dr. Guth believes that a key element responsible for the success of the program is that it focuses in part on developing students' motivation and interest in reading. Students are given a choice of reading materials and then expected to read extensively. Teachers in the middle school work on interdisciplinary teams and the reading specialists work with entire teams to infuse reading into the curriculum. This project is funded by the school district. While still preliminary, recent reports indicate that students' scores on annual reading assessment are improving (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004).

## The Role of Professional Organizations

Policy initiatives related to adolescent literacy are also supported by a wide variety of professional organizations, such as the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Middle School Association (NMSA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Reading Conference (NRC). IRA, in particular, has taken a strong advocacy role related to the role of the reading professional in secondary schools through its position statements and standards documents (e.g., 2000; 2004). IRA's policy statement on the role of the reading specialist, for example, indicates that "there is recognition of the need for personnel with specialized knowledge of reading instruction who can provide essential services not only to students but to teachers whose diverse students present many challenges" (2000, p. 2). In addition, IRA recently (2004-2005) has provided leadership in a collaborative effort of national content area organizations to develop standards for the preparation, hiring, and continued professional development of literacy coaches in secondary schools. These new standards are not available at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

## Need for Additional Research

Numerous recent documents indicate that research on adolescent literacy is still in its infancy, and research on the role of the literacy professional in middle and high schools is even more limited. Along with new programs to better serve adolescents, strong programs of research and evaluation are necessary. Research related to a coaching role for literacy professionals in secondary schools could include:

- a. Studies of the potential benefits for student literacy growth as well as increased learning across the curriculum.
- b. Studies of the potential benefits for content area teachers' professional development, including an analysis of constraints under which teachers operate on a day-to-day basis that may negatively impact instruction.
- c. Studies of program designs that facilitate literacy coach retention and professional development.
- d. Studies of program designs that involve administrators, teachers, students, families, and the community in promoting a whole-school focus on literacy and learning improvement for middle and secondary students.
- e. Studies of the impact of school, district, state, and federal policies on the instructional decisions of teachers related to teaching literacy within their content instruction.

Research designs that simultaneously explore multiple aspects of the literacy coaching model as part of an all-school (or district) effort toward

curricular change are especially needed, since secondary school cultures have often been found to be resistant to change in the past (e.g., Cuban, 1993).

## Future Steps

Conversations about improving literacy instruction for adolescents should include a wide range of professional organizations as well as parents, community groups, and educators. These groups can work together for state and district funding and to support federal initiatives such as the legislation mentioned earlier. Literacy professionals working in middle and high schools have the potential to provide on-going professional development for teachers who are attempting to blend literacy strategies and instruction with their content instruction. Teacher educators and school district leaders can make a difference by ensuring that programs that prepare school-based literacy professionals provide these individuals with the knowledge and background needed for working effectively with middle and high school teachers to improve the literacy of adolescents.

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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE PUBLIC AND POLICY-MAKING ARENA

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## Abstract

*The topics of projects and partnerships to further the efforts of teacher educators and researchers in academic communities to make a difference in the areas of policy making were continued for a second year. Participants at the Teacher Education Division's business session at the College Reading Association's 2004 annual fall conference were active in sharing their ideas and past experiences in small "break out" groups of interest with suggestions for applying these ideas in their own settings. A legislative update and specifics of the focus group conversations that followed are summarized by presentation leaders.*

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**I**n today's world, messages and opinions concerning education are prolific. Therefore, it is critical that professional educators find ways to be proactive in communication, research, and collaboration with the public and

policy makers. This topic was the focus of an interactive/working session for the Teacher Education Division (TED) meeting for the College Reading Association's annual conference in Delray Beach, Florida in October, 2004. This presentation followed previous discussions of political maneuvers for gaining power at the decision-making tables. The development of this set of related focus groups built on the Teacher Education Division's agenda in recent years of creating a stronger more visible presence in the media and within political forums.

Participants received a brief policy and legislative update based on the reports of Barbara Fox. These topics represented involvement through partnerships, news editorials, and political lobbying. These same topics were repeated with the intention of stepping forward toward guided, relevant projects to immerse participants in active roles. TED participants then had an opportunity to choose a focus group concentrating either on writing in order to communicate effectively with the public or policy makers, designing research that impacts public opinion and policy, or forming collaborative partnerships with the public and policy makers. Focus group leaders, Jack Cassidy, Jill Lewis, Allen Berger, Judy Embry, Ray Reutzel, and Wayne Linek, led a brief overview of the objectives/framework of each group and then the participants had an opportunity to join one of the focus groups for a working session. Each focus group then shared the results of its collaboration with the large group and discussed plans on how to continue the communication and implement some of the ideas throughout the coming year. Within one week of the session, all participants received electronic copies of the notes from all groups' discussions and emails of contacts, the results of each focus group's collaboration, plans for continuation of the communications, and suggestions for implementation of the ideas throughout the coming year. The participants were invited to contact focus group leaders for feedback and support with new ideas and projects to develop a safe environment for educated and meaningful involvement.

The purpose of this article is to share the gist of the presentations, the directions that participants chose to pursue for future interactions, and the impact that TED members, through their choices and voices, may have on the field of teacher education. The paper is written collaboratively using contributions from the group leaders and notes from each presentation.

## **Situating the Problem with a Legislative Update**

**Leader: Barbara Fox**

Just a decade ago most in the education community gave policy making only a casual nod. The prevailing view among most educators was that legislation and policy is best left to the policy makers, while education fares best



under the stewardship of teachers. However, events over the past several years have awakened our interest in, and our need to, become engaged in the policy arena. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) illustrates the importance of engaging in the policy making process. NCLB is the latest iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), first passed in 1965 as part of Lyndon Johnson's vision for a Great Society. ESEA is the flagship education law for kindergarten through grade 12 education. Before its latest reauthorization, or renewal, earlier changes in ESEA had minimal effects on most literacy educators nationwide. For this reason there was no real call to arms when the latest reauthorization, now NCLB, was considered by Congress.

With its focus on evidence-based practice and strong accountability, NCLB took many in the literacy community by surprise. NCLB was a product of a growing national concern about failing schools and a perceived reading deficit. Retrospectively, we had a clear warning that the stance of Washington policy makers was changing when The Reading Excellence Act was passed just three years before NCLB. President Clinton and others in the Congress believed that our nation faced a serious reading deficit and were determined to do something about it. The Reading Excellence Act was part of the solution by funding programs to improve teacher quality through training teachers in how to put research findings into practice.

Now add to the heightened national concern over literacy a mandatory reauthorization of ESEA. Into this milieu steps a newly elected President under whose watch the massive ESEA bill will be renewed. We now have the perfect storm: (1) a nation worried about widespread reading deficiencies, (2) an executive branch interested in improving literacy and reforming education through evidence-based practice and strict accountability, (3) a plethora of highly vocal interest groups clamoring for more attention to developing word-level proficiency, (4) several scholarly reports that document and describe the results of reading research and evidence-based practice, and (5) the reauthorization of ESEA.

We can only speculate whether NCLB would look decidedly different if groups of teachers and teacher educators nationwide had spoken out on issues. What we do know is that proactive advocacy will make a difference in future policy decisions. We have many opportunities to speak out on issues, to build strength through working collaboratively with groups that share our concerns, to become involved in the policy-making process by informing policy makers of our views, opinions and proposed solutions to problems, and to affect federal and state laws and policies. You will find in the sections that follow suggestions for making a difference in public and policy making arena. The point is to look forward, to be proactive, to anticipate likely events, and, in so doing, to be effective advocates for children, teachers and teacher educators.

## Advocating for Effective Federal Literacy Laws Leaders: Jill Lewis and Jack Cassidy

Discussion in this focus group centered on how advocates can make a difference in the policy arena by persuading decision-making bodies to take particular actions. Advocates might work with Federal legislators to get a new bill introduced in Congress, change an existing bill, alter a bill under reauthorization, or lend a hand in getting a bill enacted into law. To work effectively in this arena, advocates need to be familiar with the views of members of Congress, especially those who have already demonstrated an interest in education, and an understanding of the importance of quality teaching, adequate resources, and program differentiation based on children's needs. By spending time getting to know your representatives in Congress prior to consideration of specific bills, you will be well-positioned to lend your voice to the deliberation process while bills are being drafted. In fact, legislators sometimes reach out to hear the views of constituents they know who are interested in specific legislative areas. If you have been visiting your legislator regularly or contacting him/her by mail, email, telephone, to offer suggestions and express concerns, you may be tapped for ideas when a bill that addresses your area of concern is under consideration.

An effective advocate recognizes that the earlier in the lawmaking process ideas and solutions are put forth, the greater the likelihood of success. At the early stages you have fewer legislators "standing their ground" on some point. It is understood that there will be give-and-take in this early stage. More people will be invited to comment on proposed legislation. Conversely, the closer a bill moves towards becoming law, the fewer the opportunities to have a significant impact on literacy policy. To further elucidate this point, a description of milestones in the federal legislative process and the opportunities they present for advocacy follows.

### *Milestone 1: Before a New Law is Formally Introduced*

The most propitious time to affect legislation is well before a new bill is introduced, when the nascent bill is not fully written. When a prospective bill is in the formative stages, provisions are more easily added, deleted or modified. At this point in the policy-making process, it is a matter of convincing the bill's sponsor (the legislator who is taking the lead in introducing the bill) and the sponsor's staff of the merit of sound literacy policy. It has become increasingly necessary to prove that your proposal is grounded in research you have done or that has been done by others and that proves your point. It is never enough to say an idea is bad or good because that's how you feel about it. There are numerous places where you can seek supporting evidence, but understand that federal (and state) legislators may give some of the sources, such as teachers' unions, less credence than other sources,

such as the National Governors Association. However, note that if you are talking to other audiences, such as teachers, to get them on board for advocacy, information from teachers' unions might be very well accepted as evidence. A list of useful websites appears at the end of this article. Use these as a starting point for information; they will often lead you to other related and valuable documents.

### *Milestone 2: After a Bill is Referred to Committee*

Once a bill is introduced in the House or Senate, it is referred to the committee that has jurisdiction over the proposed legislation and then on to a subcommittee with an even more specific focus. The majority of the deliberations and discussions occur in the subcommittee, giving the subcommittee (and full committee) considerable power and influence over the makeup of proposed legislation. The effective advocate is quick to realize this, and hence develops relationships with staff members and offers input to subcommittee staff (and committee) on a regular basis. It may surprise you when you first meet a 'staffer' that he or she is as much as 30 years your junior. Don't be fooled! These young staff members are very bright, and it is their job to find out what you are thinking and whether your message is something that can help the legislator's cause. Jill found that in one case when she worked with a staffer in an attempt to modify a bill, the staffer realized that Jill's information could mean trouble for the bill and for the legislator who was the bill's sole sponsor. Although the legislator made minor modifications to the bill in response to Jill's request and information, the changes were insufficient. Jill had meanwhile garnered enough support from other legislators for the point of view she and representatives of other professional organizations were expressing, that the bill was ultimately defeated.

### *Milestone 3: Once Hearings are Set*

While the new bill is in committee (or subcommittee), a series of hearings are held to document the views of experts, interested groups, and concerned individuals. Through providing testimony personally or through garnering experts to give testimony, the advocate assures that the rationale for wise literacy policy is recorded and noted by the committee (or subcommittee). Advocates routinely check websites, the Federal Register, and legislators' offices to learn of scheduled hearings. Often, especially at the Federal level, advocates need to notify the committee holding the hearing of their intent to testify. There is usually a time limit on testimony, ranging from two to five minutes, with a short period for the committee to ask questions afterwards.

Lewis, Jongsma, and Berger (2005) suggest that advocates who want to testify study the materials carefully and do research on various aspects of the text. They organize meetings with like-minded individuals to view the pro-

posed bill and ask questions about it, sometimes acting in a Devil's advocate role. They organize individuals to testify in support or in opposition to the bill, and insofar as possible, these advocates orchestrate media events to call attention to their concerns or to promote support for the bill. They may work to increase public awareness by writing letters to the editor and appearing on local radio programs.

If you are testifying, you should be very familiar with the content of your testimony, even if someone else has written it for you, so that you can answer questions and even rephrase some of the ideas as appropriate during the question period. Your responses to questions should be polite and reflect that you have sophisticated knowledge about the topic that extends even beyond the testimony. Also note that when you have completed your testimony, you should ask to have your comments and any supporting documents included in the record of the meeting. (Lewis, Jongsma, & Berger, 2005). Be aware that others testifying may contradict your point of view. This is why it is so critical to have done your homework so that you can present as strong a case as possible.

#### *Milestone 4: Mark-up After the Hearings*

Up through hearings, the advocate is likely to find the process accessible, and the staff willing to discuss ideas. But after the next step, mark-up, opportunities to make substantive differences are significantly reduced. During mark-up legislators meet to offer and vote on amendments, and decide whether to forward the bill to the full committee where the process is essentially repeated. On approval of the full committee, the bill is sent to the floor of the House or Senate for a vote. While legislators may be persuaded to offer amendments to a bill, this is not the most productive way to affect legislation. A bill that is passed by only one chamber is sent to the other for consideration and the whole process is repeated once again. If you are supportive of a bill that has gone to the House from committee for a full vote, your advocacy might focus on getting others to sponsor the bill. The more legislators who are signed on as sponsors, the more likely it is to pass. You can follow a similar procedure once the bill moves from the House to the Senate.

Sometimes it happens that the House and Senate approve different versions of the same bill. Then a conference committee consisting of members from both chambers meets to iron out any differences. Since conference committee negotiations focus on provisions of the bills as passed by the respective chambers, this is not the time in the process for adding new provisions. Rather, the advocate's goal is to encourage conference committee members to steadfastly hold onto provisions that articulate sound literacy policy rather than negotiating important literacy provisions away in order to

reach consensus. After the conference committee reaches a consensus, the bill is returned to both chambers for a final vote. The process ends when the president approves or vetoes the bill.

The savvy advocate knows how to frame ideas and solutions, how to build coalitions, and just as important, when it is most advantageous to encourage lawmakers and committee staff to embrace wise literacy policy. The more the literacy advocate knows about the federal lawmaking system, the more likely the advocate is to offer suggestions at points in the process that afford the greatest probabilities of having ideas incorporated into law and, consequently, the greatest prospects of making a difference in the public and policy arena.

## Writing for Further Communication Leaders: Judy Embry and Allen Berger

How to reach politicians through the media was the overriding concern that surfaced during the focus meetings, and the following ideas were shared to support the success of written communications:

### *Letters to the Editor*

Don't hesitate to write to clarify any misconception that may appear in the newspaper (Berger, 1997a). Allen Berger shared a letter to the editor he wrote that appeared three days earlier in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. The newspaper had said in an editorial that "half the students in Cincinnati public schools cannot read." Allen shared his letter in which he asked, "Do you mean they can't read a map? Or do you mean they can't read a dictionary? Do you mean they can't read science? Or do you mean they can't read imaginative literature? Perhaps you mean they can't read a love letter?" He continues and points out that "there are so many different kinds of reading that to say that half of the students 'can't read' is to write nonsense. . . ." (Berger, 2004)

### *Opinion/Editorials*

Informally called op/eds, these are longer pieces that range from 500 to 700 words. To write one may take between 10 to 20 hours. Before sending it to the newspaper the suggestion was made to share it with students. Run off copies of your final draft and ask students to read for clarity and write their comments in the margins; discuss and then collect all the drafts to look over when you are refreshed. Make any changes necessary before you send your op/ed to a newspaper. You can send an op/ed or a letter to the editor by fax, by email, or by regular mail. If you send by email, don't send as an attachment because most newspapers will not open attachments.

### *Radio and Television*

Other ways to influence public policy through the media include radio, television, and the Internet (Berger, 1997b). Go to or phone your local radio station and ask how you can share your ideas. You'll find that they will be pleased to know of your interest. For television, choose someone in your literacy group who has an attractive way of presenting ideas succinctly. Through the Internet you can convey your ideas through emails, chat rooms, blogs (web logs).

### *Communication with Representatives*

Politicians are receptive to letters from their constituents so don't hesitate to write to them. Send an email, a post card, or write a letter. Keep whatever you write to one page and be gracious. Remember, no matter how misguided, politicians are human, and nobody likes to be attacked. Simply explain there is another view and share it. Or if you like the politician's view, express your support. If you prefer, you can phone. Whether you phone or write, your message will be conveyed to the politician through an aide.

### *Political Aides*

If you are teaching, invite an aide to come into your class to share ideas with students. For every course that one of us teaches, an aide to a congressman is invited. The congressman happens to be John Boehner, chair of the Education and Workforce Committee of the U. S. House of Representatives. Congressman Boehner also contributed to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Whatever your feelings about NCLB, an aide to a congressperson or senator can provide timely information. Students also can share their ideas about education to the aide and learn ways to share more ideas or ask questions in the future.

### *Take a Politician to Breakfast*

Politicians, like all of us, have to eat, so offer to invite one to breakfast. Ask where he or she would like to go and don't be surprised if the answer is a fast-food place where many voters eat. Wherever you go, have a good time.

### *Thanking Policymakers*

If a politician or political aide comes to your classroom and to breakfast, don't forget to send a thank-you note afterwards.

These suggestions are just a start towards organizing writing efforts to gain a forum for presenting ideas related to making a difference in public and policy-making arenas (Berger, 1999). Participants in the focus group were asked to contact the specific group leaders to share drafts and ideas for efforts to communicate through writing. Collaborative efforts are suggested when starting as well.

## Policy Changes Affecting Funded Research Leaders: D. Ray Reutzell and Wayne M. Linek

In 2002, the *Office of Educational Research and Improvement* (OERI) was eliminated from the U.S. Department of Education. In its place, the *Institute of Education Sciences* (IES) was established as the new research division of the U.S. Department of Education signaling a not-so-subtle change in the nature of research that would be provided federal research funding in the future. It was clear from the name change that future research funded by IES would need to incorporate the pursuit of scientific research as broadly defined by the National Research Council's work entitled, *Scientific Research in Education* (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Also, recent Requests for Proposals (RFPs) released by the new IES clearly demonstrated the agency's propensity to request and fund research that collected and analyzed empirical data. It was also fairly transparent that future research funded by IES would, if funded, require at some point the use of experimental randomized field trial research models.

Gaining access to schools to conduct research using random assignment can be a fairly tricky, if not, near impossible task. However, if researchers plan and design their research soon enough so as to allow for random assignment of students to experimental and control classes and teachers to experimental and control conditions during the summer months, the process becomes nearly transparent. Working with school administrators who typically use a "quasi-random" approach such as drawing names out of a hat to assign students to classes, these same administrators can be taught how to perform a true random assignment process using an Internet random numbers generator program, i.e., <http://www.random.org/>, or a table of random numbers to generate new class lists during the summer months for the following fall. Doing this during the summer months obviates the first hurdle in conducting true experiments in the field. For those parents who make special requests of teachers or classrooms, these students are tagged and allowed to participate in their requested classes but their data is dropped from the planned experiment.

Recruiting teachers to work in field-based research of any kind, let alone experimental research, is also a delicate business. For many classroom teachers, research isn't something with which they have a high level of trust, experience, or even confidence. This means, of course, that researchers will need to work closely with schools and teachers over an extended period of time to establish levels of trust between university-based researchers and classroom-based practitioners. Although this trust-building process is time consuming and can be lengthy, it will be well worth it when, as a researcher, you are able to conduct true experiments in schools and classrooms. Another hurdle for doing scientific research using experimental designs in schools



is the perennial question of "What's in it for me or us?" Teachers will willingly participate in receiving training, preparing detailed lessons, and complying with experimental fidelity of treatments when they are paid modest stipends ranging from \$500 to \$1000 each. Of course, this means that university-based researchers may need to locate or create small pockets of money to support such research. One quick way to establish a research fund is for university-based researchers to use money generated from providing professional development workshops and seminars deposited into a university-based research account. Also, providing class or school rewards like a gift certificate for purchasing books, or offering to take teachers along to the state, regional, or national conferences to present the research results increases teachers' sense of professionalism and regard for the research process by leaps and bounds.

Once research data is collected, recent trends in data analysis often frustrate researchers. In years past, when comparing group means of classes in a research study, all of the students in the sample could be used as degrees of freedom in the statistical analyses. Today, however, this can only be done when the researchers demonstrate that there is no interaction between the different classrooms (teachers) and the treatments. Otherwise, researchers must treat each classroom as "the unit of analysis" reducing the number of degrees of freedom available for hypothesis testing to usually a very few, making the rejection of the null hypothesis unlikely or even impossible. As a result, many researchers are finding hypothesis testing increasingly difficult and even suspect. They prefer instead to report only means, standard deviations, and effects sizes which are independent of sample size. Doing so leaves the reader of the report to determine if the effect sizes are of sufficient magnitude to justify any changes in classroom practices. Finally, because of the "unit of analysis" problem many researchers are turning to much larger sample sizes and increasing numbers of treatment groups to be able to use more powerful hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2001) and other advanced modeling techniques (Lomax, 2004).

As these changes in research funding and research designs occur, researchers are also turning toward the use of mixed-model designs in research (Tashikori & Teddlie, 1998). These mixed-model designs employ both qualitative and quantitative data collection processes and analyses allowing researchers to give their reports both depth of detail at the individual level (qualitative results) and broad examinations of small and large group trends (quantitative results). In fact, one might envision the cross-hairs of a rifle scope with the vertical line representing the depth of understanding resulting from qualitative research processes and analyses, and the horizontal line representing the breadth of understanding resulting from quantitative research



processes and analyses putting the research design right on target. Using these newer approaches and tools, researchers are afforded a variety of powerful, effective research design and analysis approaches that allow schools and researchers to work together to engage in and conduct useful, fundable research that will eventually impact practices in classrooms with teachers and children.

## Discussion

These focus groups were led by speakers with a great deal of experience in forming partnerships with community members and international representatives as they have created opportunities to form alliances and partnerships for advocacy. Their successful projects and the research products that developed as a result of those collaboratives are models for teacher educators to follow in making a difference in the public and policy-making arena. The present political climate toward teachers and teaching requires that we share our voices through written communication, partnerships for advocacy, and research. This call to action and the excellent suggestions from the seven presenters for immersing ourselves in purposeful projects and cooperative relationships with policy makers will help move our profession forward.

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BUILDING BRIDGES TO CHANGE  
THROUGH REFLECTION IN  
PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

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# USING THE REFLECTIONS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO HELP TEACHER EDUCATORS IMPROVE THEIR OWN PRACTICE

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## Abstract

*This study examined how a literacy educator used the reflections of 85 preservice teachers to reflect on her own practice. Data sources included reflective responses regarding effective literacy practices and reflections written after the implementation of read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons. Responses regarding best practices indicated that preservice teachers selected practices that were demonstrated in class and for which they were given guided practice, suggesting that instructors should carefully select those practices they highlight in class sessions. Identifying common themes regarding what went well and what might be changed in the implemented lessons provided support for continuing certain practices, such as requiring specific directions for tasks to be written within the lesson plans, and for revising other practices, such as providing more guidance as preservice teachers select the books and strategies they plan to use for their lessons. Use of this study's methods by other literacy educators is also discussed.*

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Over the last decade, numerous articles and studies have focused on the use of reflection to improve the knowledge and practice of preservice teachers (Baker & Shahid, 2003; Ostorga, 2002-2003; Roskos, Vukelich, & Risko, 2001). Some have presented rationales related to the benefits of having preservice teachers engage in reflective practices (Bainer & Cantrell, 1993; Kasten, Wright, & Kasten, 1996; Roskos, Risko, & Vukelich, 1998). Reflection is believed to strengthen connections between theory and practice, promote the formation of an in-depth personal philosophy of teaching, and assist in

the instructional decision-making process. Several studies have examined what instructional elements encourage deep reflective practices (Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 2002; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Szabo, Scott, & Yellin, 2002). The findings of these studies suggest that, without some type of instructional guidance, preservice teachers' reflective writings are often more of a retelling of material read or observations made than an in-depth evaluative critique that can lead to the desired benefits. Specific suggestions as to how teacher educators might foster the development of in-depth reflections include the use of microteaching (L'Anson, Rodrigues, & Wilson, 2003), the use of prompts to guide reflective writings (Baker & Shahid, 2003; Hamann, 2002), and the use of frequent scaffolded, collaborative discussions about the completed reflections (Bainer & Cantrell, 1993).

Like preservice teachers, teacher educators must also strive to improve the quality of their own practice and, in turn, the quality of the entire program. Review of course evaluations and interviews or surveys of graduates often provide the basis for course and program revision (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000). Findings from these interviews and surveys highlighted the importance of programs that focus on the integration of content (Noe, 1994) and that include field-based experiences (Britton, 1973). Teacher educators from various fields have used retrospective reflections to document their development as educators and specific practices that changed during that development (Castle, 1995; McAlpine & Weston, 2000; Stanley, 2000). However, preservice teachers' reflections did not appear to be a data source for these retrospective studies. After discussing a relatively small number of studies that have examined program effectiveness in preservice reading education, Anders et al. conclude that there remains a need for "more researchers studying their own practice" (p. 728).

This focus on research to improve one's practice fits into Boyer's (1990) category of "scholarship of teaching." Boyer maintains that exemplary university faculty members not only consistently add to their knowledge base but also are able to incorporate this knowledge into teaching practices that facilitate the development of students who are informed and critical, inquisitive thinkers. He further advocates that a "vigorous" assessment by the faculty members, peers, and students should be a critical component to both faculty evaluation and curricular development.

In this study, the researcher responds to the call by Anders et al. (2000) to examine preservice reading education through the use of self-assessment as advocated by Boyer (1990). Three main research questions are addressed in this study.

1. What are the connections between the strategies that preservice teachers see as important in their future teaching and the instructor's teaching practices?
2. What are the connections between the preservice teachers' reflec-

tions about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and the instructor's teaching practices?

3. What do the findings suggest as possible additions, revisions, and deletions to the instructor's current teaching practices?

In addition to the overall goal of improving the researcher's own practice, this study also highlights practices that may be useful for other literacy educators; moreover, it describes a reflective process that other literacy educators might also employ to study their own practice.

## Method

### *Sample*

Eighty-five preservice teachers from three different classes participated in this study. All of the preservice teachers were enrolled in their first reading course. This course focuses on the basic components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) and best practices for teaching each component. An elementary-level field experience was attached to two of the classes; during this field experience the junior and senior-level preservice teachers ( $N = 56$ ) designed, implemented, and evaluated read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons. Preservice teachers from the third class ( $N=29$ ) were members of a master's level certification program. They had completed extensive observations during a field experience completed prior to taking the reading course; however, they had not designed or implemented any reading lessons during that field experience. No field experience was attached to the reading course for these master's level preservice teachers; thus, they did not actually implement any of the lessons they designed while taking the course.

### *Materials and Procedures*

**Most Important and Most Frequently-Used Strategies.** As a part of the final examination, each preservice teacher was asked to name and discuss one teaching strategy or activity (hereafter referred to as strategy) that he or she thought would be most important to add to his or her teaching repertoire. The strategy could be one they had read about, heard discussed in class, seen demonstrated in class, or seen in an actual classroom. The written response was to include a brief description of the strategy, the component(s) of reading on which it focused, and a rationale for selecting it as an essential strategy. The researcher/instructor (hereafter referred to as the instructor) and a graduate assistant independently compiled a list of the most important strategies described by the preservice teachers. The only difference between the two lists was that the instructor combined the Venn diagram and H-chart strategies into a category called compare/contrast activities, while the graduate student had a separate category for each. Once the list of the most important strategies was

compiled, the instructor then placed each strategy into one or more of the following categories: (1) discussed in the course text, (2) demonstrated in class, and (3) guided practice with the strategy provided in class. To verify that a strategy was included in the course text, the instructor looked up the strategy in the index and then reread the pages that contained information about that strategy. A strategy was classified as "discussed in the course text" if it was found on pages assigned to be read by the preservice teachers and if a description of the strategy was included. To verify if a strategy had been demonstrated in class and/or included in a guided practice activity, the instructor reviewed her session folders for the semester. Each folder contained a schedule of the session's activities, the lecture notes, copies of handouts that were distributed to the preservice teachers, and materials for demonstrations and guided practice activities. Activities completed during the session were checked off at the end of each session so that the instructor knew what remained to be addressed at the following session. A strategy was classified as "demonstrated in class" or "guided practice provided" if the class session schedule and/or notes showed that the specified activity had been completed. An analysis of the results enabled the instructor to determine if the strategies she was trying to emphasize were those that the preservice teachers designated as important ones and what type(s) of exposure the preservice teachers needed in order for those best practices to come to the forefront of their minds.

In the two classes that included the field experience component, each preservice teacher implemented two lessons that required detailed lesson plans and reflections. For the read-aloud lesson, the preservice teacher selected a book appropriate for the students with whom he or she was working. After the cooperating teacher approved the selection, the preservice teacher developed the lesson plan. The lesson included an after-reading activity that could focus on any aspect of reading as long as it was appropriate for the book and the students. For the reading comprehension lesson, the preservice teacher needed to select a text appropriate for the instructional reading level of the group of students with whom he or she would be working. The lesson needed to address an aspect of reading on which the students were currently focusing and be tied to the district's reading goals.

A list of the strategies used for each read-aloud lesson and each reading comprehension lesson was compiled. These names of these strategies were taken directly from the lesson plans that the preservice teachers turned in to the instructor. Each strategy in this list was also classified as "discussed in the course text," "demonstrated in class," and "guided practice provided" using the same procedures as were used to classify the most important strategies. In addition, mapping the items from the list of most important strategies to those from the list of most frequently-used strategies documented which highly-ranked strategies were also being implemented in the classrooms.

Relationship of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Implemented Lessons to Course Content and Delivery Methods. The preservice teachers' written reflections of their read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons were used to determine how the classroom instruction may have impacted their teaching techniques. The preservice teachers had been instructed to divide the reflection into three categories: what went well and why, what was problematic, and what changes might effectively address the problematic aspects. Class discussions and a small group guided practice activity focused on providing support for general comments and tying proposed changes back to problematic areas.

The completed reflections were analyzed for common themes (Mills, 2003). First, the instructor read through all of the sections related to what went well and made a comprehensive list of each positive aspect and its related rationale. A second reading of this section was completed, checking off each positive aspect/rationale as it was read and adding any additional positive aspects that were found. Then positive aspects that were similar in nature (e.g., "I think my reading of the book was good because I had practiced it several times before I read it to the students." and "My reading of the book went well; I used good pacing and intonation.") were grouped together and labeled (Mills). In the case of the two previous examples, the label was "Good reading of the text." The same procedures were followed to determine common themes for each of the other two sections of the reflection. The instructor then mapped (Mills) her own practices to the common themes and, in many cases, to the specific statements made concerning what went well and what might be changed to address the problematic aspects. The mapping process involved a review of the course text to locate connections to preservice teachers' comments and a review of the session folders to pinpoint specific lectures, discussion topics, demonstrations, and handouts that may have influenced their comments. Close attention was paid to the session notes and handouts that dealt with the directions for the two lessons. As a result of the mapping, the instructor also was able to identify gaps in lectures, discussions, and demonstrations that may have accounted for aspects that the preservice teachers reported being problematic and/or aspects they would change.

## Results and Discussion

### *Strategies Preservice Teachers Would Include in Teaching Repertoires*

On their final examinations, preservice teachers in all three classes provided consistent responses to the essay question regarding the strategy they would most like to add to their teaching repertoires. When similar responses were grouped, the nine categories displayed in Table 1 emerged.

Table 1. Strategies Preservice Teachers Would Include in Their Teaching Repertoires

Strategy (IN RANK ORDER)	DISCUSSED IN TEXT	DEMONSTRATED IN CLASS	GUIDED PRACTICE PROVIDED
Story impressions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Story maps	Yes	Yes	No
Retellings	Yes	Yes	Yes
Making predictions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compare/contrast activities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anticipation guides	Yes	Yes	No
Main idea activities	Yes	No	No
Think alouds	Yes	Yes	No
Scrambled sentences	Yes	Yes	No

Two items are of particular interest. First, with the exception of the think-aloud strategy, all of the strategies focused on comprehension. The majority of the comprehension strategies listed were described as highly effective in the text and in class. The only exception might be the scrambled sentence activity in which the student correctly sequences a series of sentence strips to show understanding of a story's plot. While an engaging activity, it does not have the versatility and multiple foci that are characteristic of most of the other selected strategies.

Second, with the exception of the main idea activities, all of the strategies were discussed in the text and demonstrated in class. In addition, the preservice teachers had engaged in guided practice with almost half of the selected strategies. These findings provide further evidence of the teaching principle that preservice teachers, as well as practicing teachers, need to have multiple and differing exposures to strategies in order to understand their importance (Joyce & Showers, 1995). Instructors should make careful decisions regarding those strategies that are demonstrated and for which guided practice is given, since preservice teachers appear to remember those strategies more than strategies which may be only read about in the text or discussed.

### *Strategies Used for Lessons Implemented in the Elementary Classrooms*

When the preservice teachers implemented their read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons, they employed a wide variety of strategies. The 10 most frequently-used strategies are displayed in Table 2. The basic findings are similar to the findings related to the strategies that would be included in their teaching



repertoires. The most frequently-used strategies were not only discussed in the text, but also demonstrated in class. In addition, the preservice teachers had also actively participated in guided practice with half of the strategies on the list.

Table 2. Strategies Used for Lessons Implemented in the Elementary Classrooms

Strategy (IN RANK ORDER)	DISCUSSED IN TEXT	DEMONSTRATED IN CLASS	GUIDED PRACTICE PROVIDED
Story maps*	Yes	Yes	No
Sentence frames	No	Yes	No
Fact sheets/Affinity sheets	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compare/contrast activities*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Story impressions*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attribute web	Yes	Yes	No
Discussion webs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Text-to-self connections	Yes	Yes	No
Information text organizers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anticipation guides*	Yes	Yes	No

*\*Strategies also mentioned as important for including in their teaching repertoires*

Four of the most-frequently implemented strategies—story maps, compare/contrast activities, story impressions, and anticipation guides—were also on the list of the nine strategies that the preservice teachers considered important enough to include in their future teaching repertoires. This indicates a strong relationship between what the preservice teachers reported as important and what they actually used in the classroom. However, the variation between the two lists may indicate that these preservice teachers learned another key to best practice that was emphasized in class: the importance of matching the strategy to the text and the goals of the lesson.

*Instructional Connections to Aspects of Lessons That Went Well*

Since this is their first reading course, it is presumed that much of what these preservice teachers know about implementing good reading instruction has been learned from this class. To check on this premise, the preservice teachers' lesson reflections regarding what went well during their lessons were examined in light of what practices had been discussed/demonstrated during class sessions or listed as part of the lesson plan requirements. Four common themes evolved from an examination of the section of the reflection entitled "What Went Well with My Lesson."

First, the preservice teachers reported that, for the read-aloud lessons, their reading of the text went extremely well. They stated that this was due to the fact that they had practiced the text multiple times before reading it to the students. This enabled them to read accurately, at an appropriate pace, and with expression. It also allowed them to periodically shift their eyes from the text to the students as they were reading and to read "sideways," holding the text so that the students could see the illustrations well. These preparatory ideas had been discussed in the text and in class. In addition, the instructor had demonstrated various read alouds, asking the preservice teachers to evaluate her accuracy, pacing, expression, eye contact with the class, and ability of the class to see the illustrations during the reading. Thus, there appeared to be a strong instructional connection with this aspect of what went well with their lessons.

A second strength of many read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons was that the elementary students responded well to the questions that were asked during and after the reading of the text. This strength could be tied to the requirement that key questions be included in the lesson plan and that the preservice teachers find a way to have those key questions close at hand during the lesson. When preparing for the read-aloud lessons, for example, many preservice teachers wrote the key questions on a post-it and placed the post-it on the back cover of the book.

The third aspect that many preservice teachers reported as a positive was that the students were engaged during the entire read-aloud or reading comprehension lesson—from the reading of the material to the discussion of the material to the after-reading activity. Once again, the requirements for the lesson plan helped to ensure this engagement. Each preservice teacher needed to turn in a rough draft of the lesson plan. The instructor reviewed the draft to ensure that an engaging text had been selected, a good introduction or anticipatory set was included, and the after-reading activity required active participation on the part of the students. Comments were shared in writing and/or orally with the preservice teachers and, in some cases, a second written draft was required. Thus, the second and third strengths that the preservice teachers reported could be directly tied to lesson plan requirements and teacher review of those requirements before lesson implementation.

The final common strength was that, for the reading comprehension lessons, the students could read the text with relative ease. Since the preservice teachers had only been in the classroom for a few weeks before they implemented their lessons, they were concerned that the students would have difficulty reading the text for the lesson. In their university class, they had learned about the various aspects of readability and were asked to apply this knowledge as they selected the material for their lessons. In addition, in the lesson plan, each preservice teacher was required to include the Fry readability level of the text and a justification of why this text would be ap-

appropriate for the students involved in the lesson. When reviewing the lesson plans, the instructor's knowledge of most of the materials being read enabled her to help the preservice teachers, when necessary, change their text selections or the group of students who would be participating in the lesson. Thus, it appeared that both class instruction and course requirements facilitated the preservice students' success in this area.

### *Curricular Revisions in Light of the Reflections About Changes for Future Lessons*

When the preservice teachers were asked to discuss changes that might alleviate the problematic aspects of their lessons, seven common recommendations emerged:

1. Give more specific directions concerning the after-reading activity.
2. Provide a model or improve modeling.
3. Change the after-reading activity or an aspect of that activity.
4. Redesign the instructional sheet.
5. Require the students to read more of the material themselves.
6. Pick a different book.
7. Deal more effectively with unacceptable student behaviors.

Noting that the first six recommendations appeared to be directly related to the content of the reading course, the instructor determined what changes in her own instruction would address these recommendations and help future preservice teachers avoid the problems these two groups had encountered.

The instructor was surprised that so many preservice teachers commented that they needed to give more specific directions concerning the after-reading activity and that they needed to model more. The directions, written in the actual language that the preservice teacher planned to use, were a required element of the lesson plan. Modeling had been extensively discussed and used in class and was highly recommended for inclusion in the lesson plan. Upon reflection, the instructor recalled that when those directions were missing or poorly written in the rough draft of the lesson plan, she noted the omission or made suggestions about improving the wording of the directions. She also noted where the preservice teachers should model the expected task or show a model of the final product. She did not, however, require those plans to be resubmitted after the directions had been rewritten or revised, nor did she require that the modeling language or product be turned in before lesson implementation. This additional review, which will be done in the future, should improve the preservice teachers' ability to model and deliver those important directions that incorporate age-appropriate language and all of the critical task elements.

The instructor saw the preservice teachers' suggestions that they would

change the activity or the instructional sheet that accompanied an activity as indicators of a lack of careful planning. To focus more on the planning stage, the preservice teachers could work in small groups. Each member of the group could present the text for the lesson and three or four possible ideas for the after-reading activity. The group could discuss the pros and cons of each activity, taking into consideration the goals for the lesson and the time allotted for the lesson. The developer of the lesson could use these comments to determine the final activity and its specific components. Likewise, members of the group could bring in any instructional sheets they planned to use and try them out with the group. This would give the preservice teachers practice in giving the directions, and they would also receive feedback on ways the directions and the sheet itself could be revised/redesigned to ensure that the students would be able to complete it successfully. While these activities would take a relatively small amount of class time, they could make an important contribution to the success of the implemented lessons.

Preservice teachers' comments that they would have picked a different book and/or had the students read more indicate a lack of understanding about the readability of the book, the reading levels of the students, or both. The instructor believes that the preservice teachers had a good grasp of the various aspects of readability and were able to use this understanding to justify the use of the books they had selected. However, because the preservice teachers had been in their classrooms for a relatively short period of time, they were probably less knowledgeable about the variety of reading levels of their students. Thus, in the future, this instructor will require the preservice teachers to find out the reading levels of the students in the class, gathering data from multiple sources when possible, and use this information when selecting the book for the specific group of students with whom they will be working for the reading comprehension lesson. In addition, the instructor will continue to focus on ways other than round-robin reading that enable each student to read more and encourage the incorporation of those methods in the lesson plans.

The seventh recommendation appeared to be more global in nature. Preservice teachers need to know how to deal with unacceptable student behaviors throughout the day, not just during reading instruction. The Elementary Education Program faculty, having examined the evaluations of and by student teachers, had seen a consistent request for more expertise in this area and, therefore, in the semester following this study, a required course entitled Classroom Management was added to the program. Placed early in the program of study, it is hoped that this course will enable the preservice teachers to deal more effectively with students' unacceptable behaviors.

## Conclusions

How might educators of preservice teachers use the results of this study? First, some of the specific findings might be applicable to their own course content and delivery methods. Teacher educators should carefully select the strategies that they demonstrate and for which they provide guided practice since it appears that preservice teachers tend to place greater importance on those strategies. Perhaps instructors should demonstrate and provide guided practice with those best practices that have the greatest versatility. For example, a teacher of reading might decide to demonstrate a discussion web rather than a scrambled sentence activity. A discussion web presents students with a Yes/No question, asks the students to use evidence from the text and from personal experience to provide reasons for at least three affirmative and three negative responses, and requires them to draw a final conclusion about the question accompanied by a one-sentence supporting rationale. This strategy can be used with narrative texts and with expository texts. While the scrambled sentence activity may be a good activity to focus on the sequence of single-plot narrative texts, the discussion web—considering its usefulness with multiple types of texts and its focus on several higher level thinking skills—may more clearly merit both demonstration and guided practice.

The results also indicate the importance of carefully determining the elements that are required in lesson plans and the need for multiple reviews of those plans before the lessons are implemented. Preservice teachers in early clinical experiences appear to need the support that comes from writing down the questions they plan to ask and the exact language they plan to use when giving directions. A second review of the lesson plan may be necessary when these items are missing from the initial rough draft, since there is evidence to indicate that some preservice teachers cannot or do not adequately add or revise those elements independently.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is that teacher educators can indeed learn a great deal from examining the reflections of their preservice teachers. Regardless of the content area, instructors can use the reflections to analyze how course content and delivery methods may be positively influencing their preservice teachers' growth in both knowledge and practice. These findings can provide support for the continued use of specific practices. In addition, using the reflections to pinpoint gaps in knowledge or practice can lead to productive course revisions.

## Limitations and Implications for Future Research

### *Limitations*

While a study conducted by an instructor about his or her own practice can provide new insights and understandings about that practice (Boyer, 1990),

such a study also has its limitations. In this study, observer bias (Gay, 1996) may have influenced the mapping stage of the analysis. While conscious of the need to find specific documentation, this researcher/instructor may not have been as objective when examining the session folders to find connections between a session lecture or discussion and the preservice teachers' reflective comments as an outside researcher would have been. It would have been a good idea to embark on this study with a colleague who taught the same course. Each instructor could have completed the analysis for both sets of reflections and session folders; discussions about the differences would have helped to clarify places where observer bias may have influenced the analysis.

The strategies that students noted were most important to add to their future teaching repertoires came from a response to a final examination essay question. Even though the preservice teachers knew they would receive full points for this question by submitting a "thoughtful response," this may not have been the best method of gathering the information. The preservice teachers may have decided to write about strategies they felt most knowledgeable about rather than ones they actually felt would be most useful in the future. Responses given during a more relaxed activity, such as an interview, may have been different from those given on the final examination.

Finally, the preservice teachers' of their lessons may not have been an accurate description of what actually occurred during the lesson. However, they do represent the preservice teachers' perceptions of what occurred and thus, this researcher believes, were valid data to use for the purposes of this study. Evidence supporting the themes from the preservice teachers' reflections could have been drawn from the instructor's observation notes. However, time did not permit the instructor to observe every lesson in its entirety; using incomplete observational data may have biased the conclusions drawn from the analysis of that data.

### *Implications for Future Research*

The conclusions about the importance of varied and multiple exposure to best practices was based on the finding that eight of the nine top strategies that preservice teachers stated they would use in their future teaching had been discussed in the text and demonstrated in class. In addition, for about half of the strategies, the preservice teachers had engaged in guided practice activities. However, it should be noted that eight of the nine strategies focused on comprehension strategies. The emphasis on comprehension may have been due to the fact that, given the directive on their final examination of selecting only one strategy, the preservice teachers focused on the ultimate goal of reading—comprehension. Nevertheless, this focus on comprehension raises the following questions: What strategies in the other four

areas of reading would the preservice teachers report as being most useful in their future teaching? Would the finding related to the in-depth coverage hold constant for the strategies within each of these areas? A future study could ask preservice teachers to discuss one strategy related to *each* component of reading that they would include in their teaching repertoires. From the responses, the top strategies for each component of reading could be compiled. An analysis of which strategies within each component had been discussed in the text, demonstrated, and been part of guided practice activities would provide more comprehensive evidence of this study's finding that multiple and varied exposure to best practices is important.

The discussion describing how instruction and lesson plan requirements are related to the preservice teachers' reflections of what went well with their lessons suggests practices that this instructor should continue to use and that colleagues might want to incorporate into their own practice, if they are not already doing so. While the recommendations to alleviate some of the difficulties encountered by the preservice teachers during the implementation of their lessons are based on careful analysis of the instructors' current practices, they would carry more weight if the recommendations had actually been implemented and evaluated. In a follow-up study, the instructor could make the recommended changes to instruction and lesson plan requirements. The preservice teachers' reflections would be analyzed following the same procedures as were used in this study. High incidence of comments related to the themes of giving good directions, having students engaged in the reading of the text, and using appropriate books, activities, and instruction sheets in the section describing what went well with the lesson and low incidence of those same comments in the section describing problematic aspects would support the effectiveness of the course revisions. Such a follow-up study would complete the cycle of teacher self-assessment, demonstrating the vigor which Boyer (1990) contends is essential in the area of teacher evaluation.

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# SUPPORTING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS OF READING DIFFICULTIES IN A MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

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## Abstract

*Within many teacher education institutions, many successful professional development school partnerships exist for the purpose of preparing pre-service teachers. This study examined the influence on pre-service teachers of a professional development setting held at a museum. The researcher identified perspectives on teaching and learning at a museum held by pre-service teachers. During the Corrective Reading course, pre-service teachers tutored struggling readers at the museum including a control group placed traditionally. Quantitative analysis on pre and post course survey data evidenced a statistical significance between groups regarding museums, knowledge about working with parents of students, and utilizing the outdoor setting for reading instruction. Qualitative analysis completed through a search for patterns in the data of pre-service teachers' reflections focusing on their tutoring sessions revealed three definite themes: how education students perceive themselves as teachers, on their desire to utilize a museum as a future teaching resource, and how being at a museum setting assists the tutoring and correction of reading deficiencies in struggling readers. Results indicate a museum can have beneficial influence on professional development of pre-service teachers.*

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One of the most significant additions to teacher education programs across the country of recent is the use of the professional development partnership between the university and public schools. Many vibrant Professional Development School (PDS) relationships between schools and teacher education programs exist and much has been written about their success (Book, 1996; Dixon & Ishler, 1992; Goodlad, 1993; Levine, 1997). Educational theorists (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984) agreed long ago that practical experience is crucial to the education of the pre-service teacher. Professional development schools provide settings for this essential experience. In light of the Holmes Partnership Strategic Action Plan (1997), newly emerging PDS partnerships are showing encouraging signs of improvement and innovation (Levine, 1992). Clearly, important, successful work is being completed in PDS's, however Levine cautions that professional development partnerships are vulnerable due to the hard work and amount of attention necessary to maintain connection with universities and the challenge of prompting people to think differently. Lyons (1997) reports professional development schools of today may portend the future. Universities need to be characterized by an ability to adapt and to forge linkages with other institutions. Recognizing the need for high quality professional preparation and university/school-based partnerships (Holmes Group, 1976), teacher preparation programs are designing PDS partnerships to provide unique practicum settings for pre-service teachers so they can apply theory to practice. Within this rhetoric, universities (McVicker, 2004) have begun to enter into partnerships with museums to provide professional development settings for pre-service teachers. An uncommon collaboration with a museum near a university exemplifies this novel professional development idea and is the focus of this research.

## **Establishing a Museum-Based PDS**

According to a report produced by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, which contains findings on collaboration based on the experiences of 15 partnerships between museums and schools (Riley, 1996), there are 12 steps (Appendix A) for establishing a rapport for an effective partnership. For the purpose of this study and on-going teaching and research, stringent adherence to these steps created a quite successful partnership between the museum and our university. Specifically revisiting these steps each semester strongly sustains this partnership.

Traditionally, professional development schools are utilized by universities for training student teachers, conducting educational research, and disseminating new research findings. Since this professional development school is a museum, the conventional definition of a professional development school was not possible. As a member of the professional development schools net-

work in the community, the museum was allowed certain concessions in order to be allowed into the network. Thus, due to the lack of classrooms, student teachers could not be placed there. This led to the idea that the Corrective Reading course could be taught in the museum setting.

Corrective reading is a second reading methods course that education students take to learn assessment, diagnosis, and correction techniques with regard to reading deficiencies. Following a series of lectures and readings on assessment and diagnosis of reading problems, the education students are assigned a struggling reader to work with for seven weeks. This serves as a practicum experience for the students to gain experience with a variety of reading assessment tools. Once the assessment data is collected, education students are required to diagnose and identify specific reading problems and create goals for tutoring the child, aspiring to correct reading deficiencies. Important to note, throughout the course of the assessment, the tutors are concerned with identifying reading strengths as well as deficiencies. The philosophy of corrective reading is to identify reading strengths and build on those to correct reading deficiencies or weaknesses. Although the Corrective Reading course in itself is not a student teaching experience, holding the course and tutoring children in the museum setting sufficed for that requirement for the museum to be a member of the professional development school network.

The rationale for using the museum for this particular course is that those children who are struggling to learn to read in school and who are at least two years behind their peers' development, need something different. In a summary of a position statement, the International Reading Association (2000) reported making a difference means making it different. That unpretentious statement makes perfect sense in the museum setting as illustrated in the following vignette:

On the first day of tutoring as I look around the room at the sullen faces of the children, I began to formulate thoughts about how I could make remedial reading summer school different enough to make a difference for them. As the last child was dropped off, I noticed a tear stained face. She looked up at me and sobbed, "What I really wanted to do was go to camp with my best friend. But my mommy said I had to come here and read." This was such a sad statement for two reasons: one because she wasn't getting to attend camp and two, because she said *read* so distastefully. Wanting to make a difference for her was the moment I knew the museum setting might be just that. This museum located in a mid-size university town, surrounded by rural landscapes and local agriculture, offered an informal setting to assess, diagnose, and tutor her toward improvement.

This particular Corrective Reading course was taught exactly like other sections in other Professional Development Schools in the network. Holding

the course at a museum provided that one tiny facet that made it different for the aforementioned struggling reader. Like many struggling readers, she was contrary about being tutored and resistant to learning. Many of the children tutored in this program appear this way and seem to have lost the hope for success.

## **Inspiring Readers with Primary Artifacts and Experiences**

That future teachers of reading should become accountable professionals is an ideal held by all literacy and language professors. Most envision preparing beginning teachers with balanced reading philosophies and who can consider each child, as an individual with personal literacy needs. Striving for the use of multiple viewpoints and the ownership of various reading strategies to offer children is often a goal that reading professors usually have in mind for their students. Inspired by many researchers and the International Reading Association (2000), reading professors attempt to develop reading teachers who are accountable to the individual needs of each student. This is quite evident in the IRA position statement that states there is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children how to read. Clearly, this means each future teacher should learn to find ways to teach and assess the needs of each student and be willing to utilize alternative methods and settings to help the student improve reading performance. They must practice flexibility in choosing or altering their methods when it is determined a child is not learning to read.

### *Corrective Reading*

Within this study, the departmental syllabus defined the corrective reading course as learning to assess reading difficulties and executing corrective instruction while the text defined it as improving reading while helping one or more students with a specific reading problem (Johns, 2001). These problems can range from low motivation to read to expanding comprehension to identifying words. Furthermore, the reasons that some children struggle with learning to read is as varied as the children themselves and no single approach or program will meet the needs of all who have difficulty. For that reason, the International Reading Association (2000) believes struggling readers need instruction that meets their individual needs. This implies that teacher education can provide such training with struggling readers in a campus or professional development school setting so pre-service teachers can experience what it is like to assess and diagnose a struggling reader's reading deficiencies. The results of this study suggest there may be alternative settings that may be more conducive to reading improvement of the nervous, low self-esteem of a child who has experienced multiple failures with reading.

## Why a Museum?

Traditionally, museums have education at the heart of all they do. In its second study of K-12 educational programs offered by museums in the United States, the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS, 2004) found that museums spend more than 18 billion dollars annually on such programs. The study also calculated that America's museums commit more than 18 million instructional hours every year on programs for K-12 school children. As popular places for lifelong learning, they are settings that offer a powerful educational model that inspires and influences formal education.

Many scholars (AAM, 1984; Eisner & Dobbs, 1990; Lemelen, 2002) suggested reasonable precedence that education has indeed been a primary objective of museums since their inception. Further, most museums anticipate children to be visitors who come there expecting to learn (Matthai & Deaver, 1976) suggesting a natural propensity for partnering with schools. Popular educational activities engaged in by museums include staff guided field trips for school groups, museum staff visits to schools, resource kits at school sites, teacher training, and traveling exhibits. Despite this loyalty to education, true partnerships between schools and museums have been slow to evolve.

John Dewey (1938) in penning his theory of learning through experience actually promoted a relationship between schools and museums. In fact, Dewey had a strong influence on the creation of children's museums, and in his writings stressed the importance of situating learning in experience with concrete objects. However, educators seemed to translate this thinking to what became known as field trips (Hamm, 1991; Nespor, 2000). When these trips were to museums, they were walks through museum galleries where the teachers left the talking and teaching to the exhibits and artifacts. This was typical of museum education of that period of time and of the hands off stance of most museums. Recent shifts in the philosophies of many museums across the land are toward interactive, hands on posture for educating children in museums. Although museum educators and program directors are quite desirous of this kind of visit from children and school groups, museum educators often report that teachers who bring their classes to museums appear to have a pervasive belief that it is a day off from work, failing to participate with the guide, interact with students, or monitor students' behavior (Sheppard, 1993). Many teachers perceive this notion of field trips as an experience that can teach children through simple exposure to exhibits (Gardner, 1991a); not the active participation Dewey had in mind. The museum partnership and setting that this study was undertaken hopes to shed light on how influential and beneficial the informal setting of a local museum can be for a classroom outside of the school classroom.

Other past attempts at museum partnerships involved museums docents

going out into the schools and speaking about special programs to classes; then meeting those same classes at a later predetermined time to give the tour on the museum site. Although this type of teaming with the schools was successful, teachers did not tend to embed or seek museum collaborations as part of their curriculum, implying they still viewed it as enrichment.

It seems to be the case that museums actively engage in education as part of their day to day programming (Eisner, 1987) as revealed by the Institute of Museum and Library Studies (2004). The study reports 88% of American museums are working with schools to better support school curriculum standards (Riley, 19968). However, few teachers and administrators take ongoing advantage of these efforts (Frankel, 1996) tending to perceive museum experiences as field trip activity rather than an integral part of instruction. Thus, museums are not reaching their full potential for teaching due to teacher perception. Teachers are not to be blamed but encouraged to change their views of how museums and their resources can assist student learning as a place that can make a difference for some or all students.

## **One Teacher at a Time**

Museums are anxious to be connected to schools for the purpose of education. As partnerships seem to be slow in evolving, many feel creating personal one-on-one relationships with teachers who come to the museum with a request is a transformative experience. One such partnership (Frankel, 1996) reported a collaboration using the rich resources of a local museum and the willingness of museum staff in response to an expressed need by two teachers. They had a need to create a social studies thematic cycle that would align with their state standards. Crafting real solutions to the challenges teachers face with state expectations and working together as a team for the benefit of student learning resulted in teachers, students, and museum educators shifting the way they think about learning. Museum educators (Frankel, 1996; Riley, 1996) are quick to report that each time a positive collaboration such as the aforementioned is reported, other teachers follow through word of mouth testimonials. Further, if a teacher has one of these transforming experiences with a museum, there may be an inclination to utilize it as a regular feature of personal teaching repertoire or differentiated teaching. The task before museums is to accelerate the use of their resources for learning through collaborative partnerships with teachers or entire schools on a regular basis. Tutoring children in a museum utilizing its vast resources highlighted the beneficial influence they can have on learning; a notion even experienced practitioners have not given much thought or merit (McVicker, 2004).

## What Does a Museum Offer that School Does Not?

Museum settings are treasure houses of materials that enliven our past, stimulate our enjoyment of the present, and help introduce us to the future (Riley, 1996). Museums continue to find that enrichment of learning (Riley, 1996), the opportunity to encounter rare and unusual objects (Brodie, 2001), informal and hands-on learning experiences (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), and responsiveness to teachers' requests (Riley, 1996) attract teachers to bring their students to museums to learn. They maintain that schools do not have the funding to provide the first hand information that museums do and the inadequate resources of the schools can be extended through a museum partnership (Frankel, 1996). As Robert S. Martin, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences suggests, museums are important to the education of children because they can connect students to ideas and experiences in direct, vivid, and meaningful ways (Martin, 2004).

In addition to real, first-hand experiences, museums often staff curators who often have extensive expertise in their respective fields. New information taught with authentic artifacts in museums replaces vicarious methods such as videos or books. In addition to the resources available are museum educators who have the time and desire to team with teachers to plan for incredible learning units tied to state standards; a daunting task for a teacher in addition to the regular duties of daily instruction. In a recent study, museum respondents (Riley, 1996) continued to report that teachers most influence a school's decision to use museum resources.

## Purpose

The purpose of this research was to assess attitudes and opinions of pre-service teachers who were participants in a corrective reading course placed in a museum setting. The goal was to determine their perceptions of the impact of a museum PDS on three levels: on themselves as teachers, on their desire to utilize a museum as a teaching resource, and how being at a museum setting impacted their knowledge of reading instruction. This article intends to highlight this partnership by describing the research study completed at the museum, presenting some of its findings, and offering suggestions for those who are involved in creating professional development partnerships for teacher education programs and school faculties.

## Methodology

In order to meet the challenge of providing superior teacher education (Levine, 1997), a professional development partnership was developed with a museum. A section of Corrective Reading was placed in a museum setting

near the university for the purpose of teaching pre-service teachers to assess and diagnose reading difficulties and plan for correction with actual struggling readers. This study was undertaken to explore the influence of a museum setting on the progress of pre-service teachers' instructional skills. These students were clinical practicum students placed in the section by random selection through university enrollment procedures.. In addition, a control group selected in the same manner was placed in a generic campus setting. Collecting pre-course/post-course surveys and the tutor's weekly reflections informed this study.

## Research Questions

Three specific research questions guided the study: How do education students perceive themselves as teachers? What is the desire of pre-service teachers to utilize a museum as a future teaching resource? Does tutoring in an informal setting like a museum benefit the tutoring and correction of reading deficiencies in struggling readers?

## Informal Settings at the Museum for Tutoring

Placing the delivery of this course at a museum partnered with the university as a professional development school made this study unique. The museum provided an alternative, informal setting for university students to tutor children. As is the custom of most museums, the primary responsibility of the museum educator is to interpret what is available to visitors.

In this vibrant relationship between the museum and university was a strong commitment to make all resources available to the university students for creating tutoring lessons. In addition, the participants were able to use the indoor settings like galleries as well as the outdoors for tutoring environments. While some would argue this seems distracting for the children, it actually served to enhance the tutoring experiences for both the university tutors and their elementary school tutees. The setting included outdoor gardens with benches, fishponds, and theme gardens. The indoor cultural center was available for tutoring and offered artifacts collections, galleries with visiting collections, archives, computers, and books. The nature area availed a pond, bridges, stream, and natural reading nooks along the pathways. A turn-of-the-century mansion complete with screened in porches and a secret passage way allowed for indoor tutoring on rainy or hot days. In this rich setting, many students found truth in the notion that reading is the transaction between the reader, the text, and the environment (Rosenblatt, 1978; Hancock, 2000) even with those who struggle to learn to read.



## Design and Procedure

To answer these research questions, 40 participants, 20 at the museum and 20 in an after school setting were studied for five semesters. Each participant responded to pre-course and post-course surveys regarding their knowledge about reading instruction and museums as teaching resources. These samples were deemed appropriate as the experimental groups and the control groups were randomly selected from a homogenous group of students actively participating in the teacher education program. Students who are assigned to the two sections of the course used as the experimental and control groups had equal probability of being selected from the population of students in the teacher education program because the computer system takes their course requests and creates a random assignment of courses for their schedules. This ensures the sample is representative (Keppel, 1991) of pre-service teachers who are ready for this course. Pre-requisites include acceptance into the teacher education program and successful completion of the basic reading methods course. The independent variable was the placement of one of the sections of the course in the museum setting.

Characteristic of survey research (Krathwohl, 1998) questions for the survey about the use of museums and teaching were carefully crafted to reflect the program goals set forth by the teacher education department. The pre-course and post-course surveys were administered to all participating pre-service teachers (N=40 each semester) at the beginning and ending of the five semesters. A Likert Scale was used which required the participants to respond by circling a number for each corresponding item on the scale 0 through 10. Due to the nature of course delivery, there was 100% response rate. In addition to the scale responses, each question had a place for qualitative commentary and participants were encouraged to comment regarding their choices (Appendix B).

Additionally, weekly reflections from the pre-service teachers chronicling their tutoring experiences at the museum and after school settings were collected. Finally, field notes taken during debriefing discussions after each tutoring session further informed the study. Triangulation was provided through a final data set from focus groups at the end of each semester with pre-service teachers. Additional information was collected from museum staff after teaching the course at the museum following five semesters to further reveal the impact the presence of university students and children has on its day to day operation as reported in their comments.

## Limitations

This research was site-specific, and it is recognized that the small sample size (N=40) each semester was a limitation. However, the comparison with

control groups over the span of five semesters allowed for making credible coding decisions while reading the qualitative data sets. The use of a self-report questionnaire presented difficulties so pre-service teachers were asked to willingly participate through informed consent as defined by Cannell (1985) who instructs the survey researcher that the validity of survey data depends on persuading a scientifically selected group of people to provide accurate and detailed information about them and their opinions.

## Analysis of Survey Data

A central purpose of this article is to report on data collected during pre-course and post-course survey results according Krathwohl (1998), in order to detect a change in attitude regarding the use of a museum for reading instruction. Data collected from control groups (Krathwohl) meetings and tutoring on campus were also analyzed. Using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), descriptive statistics provided comparison results between groups. Through descriptive statistics, the museum groups showed a significant change in their attitude change from not regarding a museum as a resource for teaching toward the use of museums for providing reading instruction suggesting these differences were not random fluctuations (Table 1).

**Table 1: Pre-Service Teacher Survey Data Analysis**

MEASURE	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN	F	SIG
Q1	4.225	1	4.225	3.449	.080
Q2	4.225	1	4.225	1.918	.183
Q3	2.5	1	2.500	1.667	.213
Q4	8.100	1	8.100	3.183	.091
Q5	27.225	1	27.225	17.347	.001
Q6	5.625	1	5.625	3.636	.073
Q7	8.100	1	8.100	5.341	.033
Q8	4.900	1	4.900	1.089	.311
Q9	133.225	1	133.225	132.856	.000
Q10	50.625	1	50.625	23.217	.000

## Discussion

Most notable was the difference between groups regarding questions 9 and 10. Those students placed at the museum that experienced first-hand how collaboration with a museum professional can benefit teaching had statistically significant changes in their post test scoring of question 10. Most, if not all, shared a definite score reporting appreciation and interest in the

use of museums as teaching resources and possible teaching locations. This is in direct contrast to the school-based pre-service teachers who tutored with books and materials they brought from home or campus. Typically, when tutoring after school, the pre-service teachers had virtually no collegial assistance or facility usage other than a physical space to tutor in those settings.

The other significant difference both on the survey and in the qualitative journaling dealt with question 10 which asked for a response about appreciation and interest for using an outdoor environment for learning to read. Both the museum-based experimental group and the school-based control group were allowed the freedom to choose where to tutor in their respective settings. Even though some of the school-based pre-service teachers chose to tutor outside, they did not seem to comment specifically on it as beneficial other than just making simple statements of fact, e.g., "Today we went outside for the tutoring session."

## Qualitative Differences

Due to the successful implementation and level of commitment by the museum and its staff, the reflection information from the pre-service teachers was quite positive as reported in vignettes in following sections of this paper. Certain themes emerged when the qualitative data from museum groups were viewed in the categories of motivation. Conversely, as the anecdotal data was coded and categorized, striking omissions, mostly regarding using thematic units and primary sources and places to tutor, in the reflections of the school-based groups were noted. As compared to the PDS museum setting, clearly, the bland school-based setting with limited resources, their experience was not as favorable as the museum-based groups reported in the following qualitative data report vignettes.

## Qualitative Vignettes from Museum-Based Tutoring

Pre-service teachers in the museum setting reported specific victories with their tutees as a result of the influence of the museum environment as illustrated in the following vignettes:

### *Reading about Turtles*

Two of the children were fascinated with the turtles they could see sunning themselves on logs at the edge of the river; they could be seen there every morning. Their unit was about turtles. The museum's naturalist gave them a mini-lecture in their Discovery Cabin where she used a captured turtle to instruct and allow them to view up close. Later in the week, I came across them down by the river. They had binoculars around their necks and their tutor was supporting their reading in an adult field guide on turtles! Their

interest in turtles inspired them to attempt reading at a higher-level well above their instructional grade of reading according to their miscue analysis scores (Johns, 2001). These were two boys who had self-reported they could not read and who felt others viewed them as dumb in school, exhibiting a definite loss of hope for success. Due to their interest in nature (Gardner, 1983), they exhibited much higher reading ability than school reports and our miscue analysis indicated; a phenomenon first suggested by Goodman (1986).

### *The Reading and Writing Quilt*

Two girls in the group are interested in dolls and a playhouse back in the woods. They visit the museum collections department and view some of their antique dolls. They read a book about a doll and rewrite it (Lancia, 1997) innovating it to be about their own dolls. Their tutors have them retell the story out loud so they can check the depth of their comprehension (Johns, 2001). Using the language and story of the book, the girls create little books about their own dolls using the same story structure. Doing so gives reluctant writers like these two a starting point and limits the overwhelming chores of the writing process. They are sitting outside on quilts with their dolls for motivation and their tutors for support. For two girls who reported they disliked writing at the beginning of the summer, they look awfully cheerful about it now! They finish their books by editing, revising, and illustrating the pages with photos, stickers, and colorful borders. On the last day of summer school, there are two little girls and two dollies celebrating their hope for success with a reading tea party on their writing quilt!

### *The Recursive Nature of Reading and Writing Poetry*

A fourth grade girl who is here not because she is a poor reader but because she cannot write. Her tutor began offering her all different kinds of genre. They went to the museum's archives to look at old journals and original drafts. They found an old hand-written book of poetry and it so fascinated her that she begged to write one of her own! She insists on reading me her newest poem every time I go by to observe the tutor. Her little book is already full of poems and illustrations. She reads them without hesitation; after all, she was the author of those words! Many of the tutors discover that authoring (Kress, 1986) is a great way to work on reading! This experience sends them into the teaching profession inspired to have kids write on a daily basis.

### *Attention Deficit and Ants*

There are many success stories already in this setting. One such victory involves a fourth grade boy who is difficult to keep on task (his parents report he has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder.) and who reports that he cannot read, has fallen in love with ants. He becomes desper-

ate to read about them in books, discovering you can make them into pets. He insists on learning how to make an ant farm of his own, motivating more reading! His tutor helps him make an ant farm out of a pop bottle and supports him in writing a book about ants. She reports he is not hard to keep on task (Cole, 2000) now that she has discovered he likes ants. Incidentally, she told me at the first of the semester that she disliked being outdoors and did not like this “buggy” place. The last time I saw her, she was down in the dirt helping him pick up ants to put in the makeshift ant farm! The best teachers are willing to learn alongside their students!

## Insignificant Differences

As suspected, questions regarding basic constructs of the Corrective Reading course did not differ across groups. It can be assumed that growth in these areas occurs in this course due to direct, identical professorial instruction and reading assignments. Further, students' knowledge and attitudes are expected to change through first hand tutoring experience regardless of the location. Thus, questions 1-4, 6, & 8 did not exhibit statistically significant F values. Both groups demonstrated decisive growth in these areas as reported in Table 1.

## Top-Down Support Creates Successful Partnerships

Successful partnerships begin as a desire radiating down from the top (Gallant, 1992). In this case, the university department head is a visionary with ambition to provide the most comprehensive practicum experiences he can find for his professors and education students. Additionally, the CEO of the museum holds education in high regard, consciously pursues collaborations within the community, and visibly exhibits a willingness to have his museum used and thought of as a research laboratory site. Therefore, the museum and all of its resources have been made intellectually and physically available for the university students. This is exemplified in the following reflection:

I had a wonderful time tutoring here at the museum. My student was never bored and whenever we had a question, there was someone willing to help us find the answer. There are so many helpful people and resources here! I just can't believe they were so interested in what we were doing here. I kind of felt like we were coworkers and that I was a part of them. I felt so much respect from the staff and now I know what it is really like to teach! I feel like I AM a teacher now.

### *Museum Staff Engagement*

In order for a partnership to occur, museum practitioners must rethink the challenges and assumptions they held about what they do in terms of education and how they do it (Lemelen, 2002). After preparing and delivering a rather lengthy talk for the pre-service teachers about the cataloguing and handling of artifacts in a museum collection, the registrar reflected:

Preparing this lecture was a fun experience for me. I have never thought of myself as a teacher. I sit in the lower level all day and spend a lot of time at the computer addressing the daily chores of keeping track of our extensive collection. It is such a joy to have your students and the children they tutor coming down to view artifacts that will extend the books they are reading or provide information for their thematic units. It really has given me a new sense of importance with what I do. It is fun to have someone enjoy my efforts.

Usually this is not easy given the fact that most of what goes on in a museum is primarily defined by the museum director or CEO. In this case, he has provided an educator with the commitment to make sure the partnership is successful. In turn, she made the partnership a high priority so that the university students have positive, successful experiences. Students often mentioned her in their reflections as is illustrated in another pre-service teacher's reflective comment:

I never really thought about using a museum for anything as a teacher and also, I never knew they had educators working there. I couldn't believe how welcoming and helpful the museum educator was! She made sure everything we ever needed was at our disposal! She allowed my tutee and I to get into the little dollhouse and have a tea party after we looked at the antique dolls up in collections! I know I will look for people like her when I get my own class next year.

Further, the role, objectives, and latitude of museum educators vary greatly from one institution to another. Appreciatively, the support and confidence of the museum CEO for this partnership strongly underpins the success of this study. This is certainly reflected in a comment by the educator:

The CEO is very insistent for you and your students to feel like you are a welcome, integral part of this site. That means you do not have to ask permission to be places or fear you are stepping on someone's toes. Every staff member knows about this class and who you are and will be willing to assist you at anytime. We are excited you are here and want you to feel at ease and a part of us. You are not to feel like visitors.

## Staff Blending

The traditional pragmatic role of museum educators blended with other museum staff members who typically consider their roles as intellectual pursuit created an atmosphere of collaboration for the course delivery in this museum. Although each museum's situation in terms of educational decisions made are different (Soren, 1992), much of this staff participated in collective decisions on educational programming contrary to what most museum educators report (Taylor, 1990).

## Benefits to Children

All of the children brought to this setting for tutoring were considered struggling readers. Each child had an air of hopeless dislike for reading. What the pre-service teachers noted in each case was the interest in reading escalated with the child's fascination with some aspect of the museum, highlighted in comments such as this one:

When you told us to posttest the kids, I thought my kid didn't improve. I thought we had a lot of fun reading about dolls, looking at antique dolls, and writing a little book about dolls. I didn't think we were really learning much. But, she went from the frustrated level of first grade to the independent level of first grade on the test. I guess it took me the whole ten weeks of summer school for me to learn that kids that have failed have to be really interested in something to be willing to try again. My kid is going to second grade in September and now she is just a little bit behind. I think being here in this place helped her more than anything; it wasn't "school."

## Collaborative Benefits

The collaborative benefits of this PDS like no other created a special phenomenon; that of a new culture (Book, 1996) between the museum and the university that transformed both institutions and the personnel involved from each. As this research discovered, the partners experienced simultaneous renewal (Nierstheimer, Lloyd, Taylor, Moore, & Morrow, 2000) and now feel affirmed and encouraged about the work they are doing in their respective fields. This professional partnership has assisted pre-service teachers in the development of new ways of thinking, improved their teaching practices, and provided time for reflection and inquiry. It fostered collaboration and cooperative endeavors between university and museum staff members. Changes include viewing a museum as a class away from the classroom, pre-service teachers collaborating with museum staff to create their student teaching thematic units, improved teaching practices utilizing pri-

mary sources as motivators and instructional tools, and knowledge and desire to infuse non-narrative text reading into reading instruction. Viewpoints shifted in the museum staff, as reported in their responses at the end of each semester, appeared to be a wider view of how they perceived their individual job descriptions. A wonderful example is the continued comments of a registrar in the museum who typically sits at a computer working with documenting the artifact collections. One winter semester she was asked to create an artifact alphabet for assessing alphabet knowledge and then to teach the pre-service teachers about the history and name of each artifact. She responded to the prompt, "How did the presence of this course alter your role?" Her answer was:

This project brought me completely out from behind my computer and out of the climate controlled collections rooms. It is not really my comfort level to speak before a group but I began to find I actually enjoyed your students. I found they were genuinely interested in learning about artifacts and that led to me teaching them how to properly handle artifacts with white gloves. They asked questions and that led me to other mini-talks. I found I really enjoy speaking to your classes. Now when I think of something interesting they might want to know, I write it down so I can share it with next semester's class. This has added a very nice human connection to my position, which usually deals with inanimate objects.

### *Conclusion*

Findings from this study illuminated fundamental shifts in thinking and acting in the museum setting by pre-service teachers and museum staff. As teacher education programs seek to forge new PDS alliances across the nation, it would be advantageous to create partnerships with local museums. In this study, an innovative university-museum partnership benefited all stakeholders. Although tutoring struggling readers one-on-one at a museum may be prohibitive for most classroom teachers, lessons learned from this study can certainly be applied to most classrooms. Does a teacher with a child who is struggling with reading have to take just that one child to the museum? Of course this is not possible. However, the results from this study indicate learning at and with the primary resources of a museum or other local source can have a motivating effect on a struggling reader. When these pre-service teachers enter the teaching profession, hopefully, they will inspire schools to rediscover museums as places for teaching and learning, for professional reflection and renewal, and for collaboration, accountability, and affirmation.

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## Appendix A. 12 Steps for Establishing an Effective School/Museum Partnership

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- (1) Obtain early commitment from appropriate school and museum administrators.
- (2) Establish early, direct involvement between museum staff and school staff.
- (3) Understand the school's needs in relation to curriculum and state and local education reform standards.
- (4) Create shared vision for the partnership, and set clear expectations for what both partners hope to achieve.
- (5) Recognize and accommodate the different organizational cultures and structures of museums and schools.
- (6) Set realistic, concrete goals through careful planning process. Integrate evaluation and ongoing planning into the partnership.
- (7) Allocate enough human resources and financial resources.
- (8) Define roles and responsibilities clearly.
- (9) Promote dialogue and open communication.
- (10) Provide real benefits for teachers and students.
- (11) Encourage flexibility, creativity, and experimentation.
- (12) Seek parent and community involvement.

## Appendix B. EDRDG 430-Corrective Reading Survey

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Please answer these questions in two ways. First, circle the score on the continuum according to how you think at this time. Then, if you can, add any thoughts you have on the topic under the commentary section (These should be what you might already know. What you want to know, or what you are concerned or worried about knowing for your future position as a classroom teacher.) This will assist me in making some decisions about our class. 10 being the most thought, attention or knowledge and 0 being no thought, attention, or knowledge at all.

1. I have given some thought to motivating poor, struggling, or reluctant readers.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

2. I have the knowledge I need to assess the ability of a reader.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

3. I have a strong understanding of how readers construct meaning from print.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

4. I have knowledge of a variety of reading strategies to offer readers.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

5. I have the information I need to involve parents to improve a student's reading skills.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

6. I have given some thought to using genres & materials beyond narrative fiction (poetry, non-fiction) to help readers improve.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

7. I have other options, strategies, and ideas using writing to improve reading.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

8. I have an appreciation & interest for using hands-on experiences for learning to read.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

9. I have an appreciation & interest for using a museum for learning to read.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

10. I have an appreciation & interest for using the environment for learning to read.

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0

Comments:

# A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT THE EFFECT OF A CHANGE IN PRE-SERVICE LITERACY CURRICULA ON THE PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF LITERACY AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO READING OF TEACHER CANDIDATES

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## Abstract

*This study investigated how state mandated changes in reading curriculum are implemented at the university and the impact of changes on teacher candidates. The study investigated four research questions: (a) How are state mandated changes in reading implemented at the university? (b) Do changes in curriculum impact candidates' reading Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)? (c) Do changes in the curriculum impact candidates' Theoretical Orientation to Reading (TOR)? (d) Do changes in the curriculum impact candidates' literacy planning? Multiple data sources were chosen to investigate the research questions: syllabi, faculty interviews, Praxis II, DeFord's Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP), and candidates' lesson plans. There were three major findings: state mandated changes caused programmatic differences at the university, TORP data revealed that there were differences among groups' TOR, and lesson plans revealed differences among candidates in TOR and PCK. No statistical differences were found among groups using Praxis II data.*

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## Statement of the Problem

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data in the United States indicate that 37% of U.S. students read below grade level (Donahue, Daane, Grigg & Serice, 2003). Researchers, such as Strickland note, "The

complexity of effecting change has led many advocates of systematic reform to place a high priority on changing teachers as the most efficient and direct way to effect students' learning" (p.21). It follows that teacher preparation has fallen under the scrutiny of federal and state policy makers as an area that is at fault in the afore mentioned statistics. Even the business community has recently criticized institutions such as the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), claiming that as a group, they (AACTE) value the "why" of education over the "what" ("Teacher Liberation," 2003).

Colleges of Education responded to criticism and policy directives by realigning and changing curriculum. This is being done though it is not clear who is making the policy decisions (Shannon, 1996), and the lack of a solid research base with which to make these decisions (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000). As Anders et al. emphasize, this lack of a solid research base "is a dangerous position for a field that is so vulnerable to public opinion and whim" (p. 727).

While researchers like Pearson (2001) argue eloquently that there has been evidence since 1970 that appropriate teacher education produces higher achievement in students, much more needs to be known about the conditions under which these effects are achieved (Roller, 2001). Researchers have suggested that the reading field needs more researchers studying their own practice (Anders et al., 2000). The National Reading Panel (Langenberg et al., 2000) recommends that issues that need to be resolved through research include "determining the optimal combination of preservice and inservice experience, effects of preservice experience on inservice performance, [and] appropriate length of interventions for both preservice and inservice education"(p. 5). Roller (2001) clearly articulated the paucity of data when she noted that we as teacher educators "do not collect the basic data necessary to provide simple descriptive statistics" (p. 200). Roller went on to note that there have been few studies on the impact of major policy initiatives on teacher education. Roller argued for the need for studies that enable us to "connect powerful images to specific actions that both reflect our understandings about good reading instruction and that policy makers can implement" (p. 204).

## Study Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate how state mandated changes in reading curriculum are implemented on the university level and the impact of these curricula changes on Teacher Candidates. Areas studied included: (a) content of courses and field experiences, (b) faculty perspective of the programs, (c) candidates' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), (d) theoretical orientation to reading (TOR) and, (e) instructional planning for literacy.

The study investigated the following research questions: (a) How are state mandated changes in reading implemented on the university level? (b)

How do changes in curriculum impact candidates' PCK of reading theory? (c) How do changes in the curriculum impact theoretical orientation to the reading process? (d) How do changes in the curriculum impact instructional planning for literacy?

## Theoretical Framework and Working Hypothesis

The belief system underlying this study is that the best investment a country can make is in the preparation of its teachers to teach (Darling-Hammond, 1997). However, understanding that teacher education is a sound investment is not enough, since it is an increasingly complex undertaking that the public perceives as relatively simple (Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999; "Teacher Liberation," 2003). The study was based on the belief that teacher preparation is not just knowledge of a subject area, but also the development of a theory base and ability to critically think and plan for instruction (Anders et al., 2000). Further, the environment in which candidates are taught will have impact on their PCK, TOR, and instructional planning (Burk, 1989; Flint et al., 2001; Hoffman & Roller, 2001; Maloch, Flint, Eldridge, & Harmon, 2003; O'Callaghan, 1997; Pearson, 2001; D. S. Strickland, 2001; K. Strickland, 1990; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). It is imperative that we have empirical evidence regarding how to invest our resources to improve teacher education (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Hoffman & Roller, 2001; Langenberg et al., 2000; Pearson, 2001; Roller, 2001; D. S. Strickland, 2001; Wilson et al., 2001). This socio-constructive theoretical foundation informed the working hypothesis that the construction of knowledge influences candidates TOR, PCK and instructional decisions. This implies that there is a relationship among candidates' PCK, TOR, instructional planning and the content of their undergraduate literacy courses.

## Description of Methodology

### *Description of Programs*

The study used syllabi (N=32) from all of the literacy courses (Tables 1 & 2) to provide descriptions of the literacy programs. Syllabi delineated the structure for each course, serving to establish the types of content, objectives, activities, and theoretical conceptualizations of the programs. Syllabi were analyzed using content analysis to provide descriptive data about the different programs in context (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). It is important that the differences in the programs be made transparent to avoid a Type III error, investigating a program that has not been implemented (Scheirer, 1994). The syllabi were analyzed for information about course content and activities that might influence either TOR, PDK or instructional decisions. Course objectives, assignments, field experiences, and topics that were listed were the focus of this analysis.



**Table 1. Reading Courses in Old Program**

COURSES ALL 3 CREDITS	PURPOSE	FLD. HRS.
ECE 3364 Children's Literature <i>*taken by hybrid group</i>	Is designed to acquaint and prepare educator with knowledge of: historical development of children's literature (CL); traditional & contemporary CL works; trends & issues relevant to CL; competencies for selecting & evaluating CL; utilization of CL in classroom; ways to encourage children reading for pleasure	None
ECE 3360 Teaching Reading and Writing <i>*taken by hybrid group</i>	Provide background knowledge to design reading and writing instruction, acquisition of speech and literacy are studied; Technology will be examined as an adjunct to literacy; Attention to process of writing; Whole language as well as traditional approaches to literacy; Attention to phonics instruction as an element of balanced literacy	None
ECE 4404 Teaching Language Arts in Early Childhood Education	Become effective facilitators in the teaching of language arts by examining & exploring ways: of planning, implementing, & evaluating language arts instruction as an integrative element in the classroom to combine student needs & characteristics, curriculum knowledge, and the reality of classroom teaching situations into a manageable strategy for classroom organization and instruction	10 wks 1/2 day  5wks fulltime

Tables 1 and 2 show the courses taken by the TCs in the old and new programs. Two other programs were included. These candidates took different combinations of courses due to their matriculation dates. The *hybrid* program is composed of 12 literacy credits: two courses (ECE 3364 & 3360) in the old program and the two courses from the new program (EDU 4405 & 4410). Students in the hybrid new program took four courses in the new program (12 cr.) but did not take EDU 3330.

Interview data from three faculty informants, who had taught classes in both programs and been involved in the design and implementation of the new program, served to cross-validate the information collected from syllabi (Patton, 1987). Interviews took place at the university and lasted about one hour. These data provided a window onto elements of the program that may be related to differences in candidates' TOR, PCK, and instructional decisions. Interview and syllabi data provided the context for the current study, fulfilling the need for explicit descriptions of the reading component of teacher education programs (Alvermann, 1990; Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Barr, 1994; Bean, 1993; Denton, 1998; Lieberman & Miller, 2000; Patton, 1987)

Table 2. Reading Courses in the New Program

COURSES ALL 3 CREDITS	PURPOSE	FLD. HRS.
ECE 3320: Teaching Reading Prek-2nd Grade <i>**taken by hybrid-new group</i>	<i>The candidates will:</i> have knowledge of emergent literacy reading process for beginning readers; teach children to read based on principles & theories in the research; know how to assess students' reading ability & to plan & implement literacy instruction in grades pk-2 & effectively use phonics as a component of literacy instruction.	20
ECE 3330: Teaching Reading Gr. 3-5	The purpose is to provide preservice teachers with a repertoire of approaches & strategies for effectively supporting students as they move from learning to read to reading to learn.	20
ECE 3340: Diagnosis & Application of Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education <i>**taken by hybrid-new group</i>	<i>The candidate will:</i> be familiarized with the diagnostic duties & responsibilities of the early child & elementary teacher; be introduced to & become competent in the process of diagnosis & the application of instruction of literacy for all students; have a comprehensive understanding of formal & informal diagnostic assessments as well as construction of informal assessments develop ability to to communicate student's literacy performance to other professionals, administrators & caretakers.	20
ECE 4405: Teaching Language Arts & Social Studies in Early Childhood <i>**taken by hybrid group **taken by hybrid-new group</i>	<i>Through the study &amp; application of social studies &amp; language arts as integrative elements of the elementary curriculum, candidates will:</i> focus on the nature, theory, & application of the social studies & the language arts in order to prepare students to become citizens actors, adopt problem-solving dispositions & achieve excellence in the application of oral & written communication skills; learn to use the social studies & language arts in authentic ways to integrate enrich the learning or their elementary/early childhood students; learn the use of fiction & historical fiction, connecting required district & state mandate content to the learners' life.	10 wks 1/2 day 5wks fulltime
ECE 4410: Reading Across the Curriculum <i>*taken by hybrid group **taken by hybrid-new group</i>	<i>Candidates will:</i> examine reading processes in the content areas with a transition from learning to read & write to reading & writing to learn; learn & practice methods, strategies & techniques or teaching reading & writing in all content area to diverse populations with an emphasis on acutal application of knowledge in the TOSS integrated unit & field experience. The selection & use of technology, including electronic texts, is explored. This course is designed to promote a constructivist view of content literacy by providing candidates with the methods, approaches, & strategies & strategies for teaching reading in the content areas.	10 wks 1/2 day 5wks fulltime

*Candidate data: TORP, Praxis and lesson plan data*

The study used Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) (DeFord, 1979) data to investigate the potential impact of the programs on the candidates' theoretical orientation toward reading. Theoretical orientation to reading (TOR) was studied because research (Duffy, 1977; Gove, 1981; Harste & Burke, 1977; Hoffman & Kugle, 1981; Richardson, 1996; Sacks & Mergendoller, 1997) seems to indicate that beliefs or theoretical orientation do influence, in varying degrees, teachers' instructional decisions. The TORP has 28 items reflecting practices and beliefs about reading instruction. It is a forced choice (5 point Likert scale) with a possible score between 28-140. There are three orientations considered to be a continuous scale with overlap at the borders:

- phonics → smaller than word → score  $\leq 65$
- skills → words, multiple skills for dealing with unit →  $65 < \text{score} \leq 110$
- whole language → larger than word, context based → score  $> 110$

The study utilized Praxis II data to investigate the influence of the different programs on the candidates' literacy PCK. Research (Burk, 1989; Clay, 1992; Evans & Johnson, 1991; Snow & Ninio, 1987; Stansell & Patterson, 1987; Strickland, 1990) indicates that teacher preparation courses impact teachers' PCK of reading. Other research notes the importance of teachers' in-depth knowledge of reading and theoretical knowledge of the reading processes to the development of literacy skills in the young learner (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Hoffman & Roller, 2001). Praxis II is taken as a minimum competency test by all candidates ( $n=269$ ) in the study. Test 0012 consists of four essay questions, one on reading. Candidates have two hours to complete the test. Test #0016 consists of 42 (35%) multiple choice questions related to reading. The reading score is disaggregated from both tests.

A Pearson *R* and a Stepwise Hierarchical Linear Regression were run on the dependent variables, *Praxis II and TORP data* versus the potential covariate variables of GPA, credits taken at university, and age. The researcher dropped the covariates whose R-squared increments were not statistically significant. A post hoc Bonferroni test was performed on the TORP data.

Lesson plan data formed the third piece of the data triangle. These data served to illuminate candidates' planning strategies for literacy instruction and to highlight candidates' application of TOR and application of literacy PCK. The data were analyzed using Content Analysis. While some categories emerged from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), other categories related to the research questions, TORP and Praxis data were predetermined. Particular focus was given to lesson objectives: procedures used before, during, and after reading; comprehension strategies; balanced literacy instruction; assessment, and completeness of planning. Categories related to TOR included

those related to phonics, skills, or whole language within the context of teaching processes, objectives, and primary focus of the lesson. These categories based on DeFord's (1979; 1981; 1985) definition of the literacy continuum from phonics through whole language were: whole, whole-skills, skills, and skills-phonics (see Appendix A). The lesson plans were coded by hand and were read by a faculty colleague to confirm analysis.

## Subjects

### *Praxis, TORP, & Lesson Plan Participants*

There were over 250 participants from a southeastern university's NCATE accredited teacher preparation program, aged 20-60. The majority of them were first-generation college and 95% were Caucasian females. All subjects took their reading courses at the university being studied. Four groups were formed depending on courses taken: old, hybrid, hybrid-new, and new program (see Tables 1 & 2). Permission was received from the university to use Praxis data for all candidates. The TORP was administered during a senior seminar. Nearly 80% of the candidates participated. The TORP survey included a request for students to submit "their best" literacy lesson plan. Six to ten volunteers were recruited from each program.

### *Faculty Participants*

Faculty participants were recruited based on their knowledge of the programs and the formulation of the new program. All three participants were tenured, had at least 10 years of experience at the university and were primarily focused on reading as their field of scholarship and teaching. Dr. A was a male and associate director of the undergraduate program with 20 years of experience. Dr. B and Dr. C were female with 10 years in the program.

## Results

### *The Programs: Faculty Impressions*

**Reason for Change.** Faculty participants agreed that the program was changed due to a state mandated edict as can be seen from the following quote by Dr. A: "The program changed because of certification requirements and because of NCATE standards. The board of regents required that we have 12 hours of reading content at the 300 hundred level." Faculty were enthusiastic about the change as noted by Dr. A. "The reading faculty were very positive about it. . . they didn't think they had enough time to try and do anything during the semester or quarter with one course. . . ."

*Old Program*

When faculty were asked for their impressions of the old program's theoretical orientation, all three seemed to feel that there really was not a theoretical orientation to it, as can be seen from the following quotes:

I don't think there was any philosophy . . . it was basically we have to teach a reading course and this is it . . . It was heavily orientated towards skill and drill . . . a lot of that kind of philosophy . . . (Dr. A) . . . very obvious that reading was not consciously the bedrock of the department . . . the unofficial philosophy . . . was to teach a candidate how to teach "reading" and not specifically grade levels . . . all ages learn to read in about the same way. (Dr. B)

All felt that the major weakness of the old program was a "one size fits all" (Dr. C), a lack of ability to differentiate instruction for different stages of reading and "too little time to teach too much." (Dr. C.) On the question of strengths, all faculty participants agreed that the children's literature course was the strength, and regretted losing it in the new program. "I liked that literature course that we dropped, because I had time for literature and drama and poetry . . . A lot of things that really get into the genres . . . in the children's literature course we had plenty of time for that." (Dr. C)

*New Program*

The themes that emerged around theoretical orientation were: diagnostic and differentiated instruction, skills, eclectic, and developmentally appropriate instruction. Sample comments include:

. . . though the big difference is that our students are able to differentiate developmentally appropriate instruction. (Dr. A)

They would think of . . . the characteristics of that child's learning, cognitive development . . . and the reading skills of that child should have at this particular time. They will look at . . . the literacy needs of that child at that particular age. (Dr. B)

We're all pretty much eclectic . . . it's going to be a combination . . . I believe in offering students all the options. (Dr. C)

Faculty seemed to agree on both the weakness and strengths of the new program. The weakness was the lack of a children's literature course as exemplified in the following quote: "I feel that students don't really understand the genres the way they did when we had the course . . . I think that it is problematic" (Dr. C). Strengths included: depth of knowledge; developmentally appropriate, differentiated, diagnostic instruction, and reading across the curriculum, as demonstrated by the following statements:

Before, we had to try and make everything try and fit in . . . now we have the luxury to really go into depth on different topics. (Dr. C)

Students are able to differentiate developmentally. They know that there is a difference between an emergent reader and a fluent reader and there are different strategies to enhance each child's skills. (Dr. B)

When we interview our graduates, they are saying that they feel more comfortable with teaching reading at different age levels. (Dr. C)

Diagnosis . . . because of the way we teach it . . . we all require case studies . . . the students come out of it really having advanced skills . . . in diagnosis of the issues that children can have . . . the big difference is that our students are able to differentiate developmentally. (Dr. A)

Reading across the curriculum was theoretically designed because children are reading in all content areas . . . rather than reading be a subject that students engage in at school at a certain time . . . that you read about things you don't read to read . . . that reading . . . is an activity in and of itself . . . not just something you learn about separately. (Dr. A)

## Syllabi Data

Syllabi, from all courses described in Tables 1 and 2, confirmed faculty impressions of the two programs. Figure 1 shows a significant increase in time spent on literacy curricula in the new program. The shaded regions indicate standards that had objectives tied to them. The numbers indicate the amount of time spent on objectives. Shading without numbers indicates the topic was not assigned time within the syllabus. Areas without shading but with numbers addressed topics that had no objective in the syllabi. There was an increase in weeks spent on literacy objectives across the programs 70.5 (new) vs. 41.5(old) and the number of times a literacy objective was touched on in the new (n=108) and old (n=35). The old program spent far more time on children's literature, nearly 18 weeks compared to 3 weeks in the new program. The reverse pattern held true for assessment. Phonics seemed to be a focus in ECE 3320 (new, hybrid-new), which did not appear in old program's course ECE 3360. The increase in the amount of time spent in the field, going from less than 10 field hours in the old program to 60 hours in the new program is an increase of over 600%.

**Figure 1. Literacy Objectives by Weeks Spent on Topics by Course**

	3320	3330	3340	4405	4410	3360	3364	4404
	NEW	NEW	NEW	NEW	NEW	OLD	OLD	OLD
<b>Course Objectives</b>								
<i>Curriculum Components</i>								
Balanced reading, writing, speaking & listening programs								2.5
Integration into other content areas		1.0		1.0	5.0	1.0		1.5
Scope and sequence of skills and materials						1.0		
<i>Learner Objectives</i>								
Knowledge and understanding of topics, procedures, methods				1.0				
<i>Curricular Materials</i>								
Basal readers	1.0	1.0				0.5		
Anthologies								
trade books	0.5	0.5		1.0	0.5	0.5	2.0	0.5
References					0.5	2.0		
nonfiction materials	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0		0.5	4.0	0.5
children's literature	1.0	0.5			0.5	0.5	6.0	0.5
<b>Reading Instruction</b>								
Determining individual reading levels	1	1	2					
Language acquisition & readiness i.e.	1.0					1.0		
Prereading instruction: KWLs, word recognition, phonics, structural analysis; semantics; syntactic	1.0	1.0		.5	1.5	1.0		1.0
During reading: vocabulary; decoding; control; comprehension; reading aloud; word recognition; syllables; graphic organizer	3.0	4.0			1.5	1.0		1.0
Post reading; concept vocabulary; writing-journaling; reactions; comprehension & interpretations; rewriting	2.0	2.0		.5	1.5	1.0		1.0
Writing, spelling and listening	2.0	1.0						1.0
Adjust instruction to students' needs, implementation, organization & planning, reteach, enrichment, extension	0.5		1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0		1.5
Motivation & successful feedback & follow-ups; cooperative & flexible groups; modeling	0.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0		1.5
<b>Writing Process</b>								
prewrite brainstorm, clustering, outlining, webbing	0.1	0.2		0.2	0.3	0.2		0.2
drafting—knowledge of audience	0.1	0.2		0.2	0.3	0.2		0.2
Revising & restructuring; deleting, adding conferencing	0.1	0.2		0.2	0.3	0.2		0.2
Editing—spell-check; peer or teacher conferencing	0.1	0.2		0.2	0.3	0.2		0.2
Publishing—anthologies; author's chair	0.1	0.2		0.2	0.3	0.2		0.2

Figure 1. Literacy Objectives by Weeks Spent on Topics by Course (cont.)

Assessment									
Identifying strengths & weaknesses:	1.0	1.0	3.0		1.0			1.5	
What the student is doing correctly			2.0						
Recognizing stages of development			1.0						
Informal assessments			1.0						
Authentic assessments			1.0						
Standardized tests/Basal reader									
Assessments			1.0						
Frye Readability Index/Leveling Books			1.0						
Total Number of Weeks	15	15	15	10	14.5	12.5	14	15	

Is There a Theoretical Difference Among Groups TORP DATA?

A stepwise linear hierarchal regression and Pearson r showed no significant covariation among the variables: age, credits, and cumulative GPA. Therefore no covariates were entered into the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) equation. The ANOVA yielded significant differences among the groups (n=283; F=8.140, sig.0.000). Levene's Test of Equality of Error was used to test the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups. The null hypothesis could not be rejected with  $p = 0.473$ . Therefore, the Bonferroni Multiple Comparison test was used to determine differences among the groups. The Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons indicated that there was a significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ) between old program and new program TORP scores. There were no significant differences among the other groups. As can be seen from Figure 2, old group scores were in the skills range, but closer to the phonics end of the continuum ( $M= 68.10$ ) with the new group having a score a little higher ( $M= 73.94$ ) still within the skills range of the continuum.

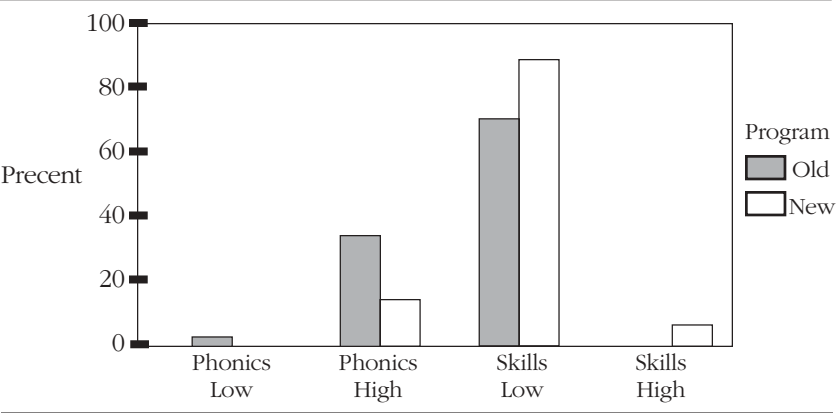
Is There a Difference in Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Praxis Data 0016 and 0012?

Two hundred sixty nine (269) test results were analyzed across the four programs for subtest 0016. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and the Stepwise Hierarchal Regression showed no significant covariation among the variables: age, cumulative GPA, and credits; a simple ANOVA was used. The ANOVA yielded results that were not statistically significant at the 0.533 level with F= 0.734.

Two hundred sixty nine (269) test results were analyzed across the four programs for subtest 0012. The results for the Pearson Correlation and Stepwise Hierarchal Regression ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) showed no significant covariation among the variables: age, credits and cumulative GPA, allowing the use of a simple ANOVA. The ANOVA yielded no significant differences among the groups (F= 1.898, sig. 0.130).



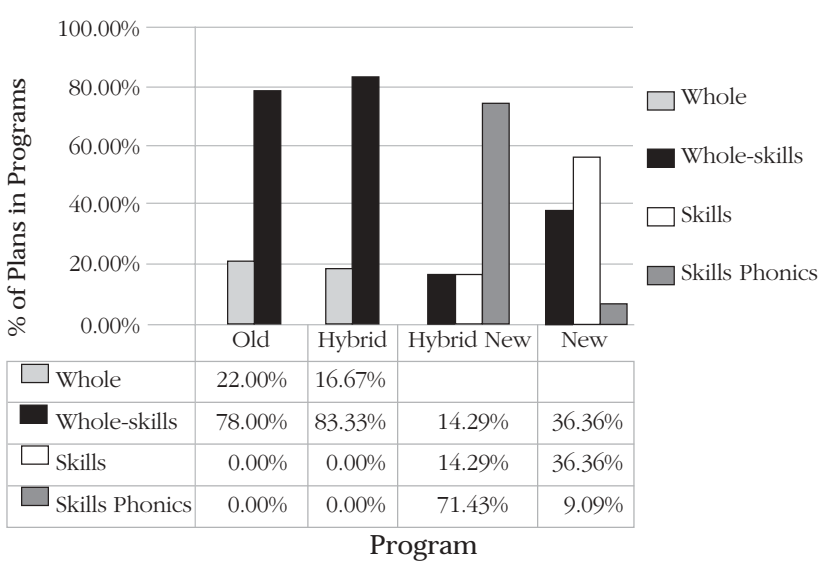
Figure 2. TORP Scores by Group



Lesson Plan Data

The lesson plan data were analyzed from the perspectives of (a) theoretical orientation and (b) depth and cohesiveness of planning. As Figure 3 shows, lesson plans from the old and hybrid programs were the only lesson plans to have a “whole language” orientation (33%). A surprising outcome

Figure 3. Lesson Plan Data by Theoretical Orientation



was that lesson plans from the hybrid-new group had a tendency to lean toward phonics activities even in grades as high as fifth grade. Lesson plans from the new group were primarily in the “skills” classification (64%) and “skills-whole” classification (34%). Lesson plans from the old and hybrid group were less specific about objectives, strategies, and assessments. Generally, the plans from the old and hybrid groups were judged to be less cohesive than plans from the new or hybrid-new group. New and Hybrid-New Lessons had more depth of detail. The new and hybrid-new program plans were more cohesive; the writers of the plans used standards, specific objectives, processes and assessments that logically went together and were more specific and cohesive. All lesson plans from the new program and hybrid-new program used more formal literacy terminology.

## Discussion

The major findings of this study were that there were (a) a significant difference between the content of the old program and the new program, (b) a statistically significant difference between the new and old groups’ TOR as evidenced by DeFord’s (TORP), (c) no significant statistical difference among candidates on Praxis II assessments, and (d) lesson plan data showed a qualitative difference in candidates’ from different programs instructional planning and TOR.

Some recent research indicates the most important factor in student learning appears to be the teacher (Anders et al., 2000; Langenberg et al., 2000; Wilson et al., 2001). Researchers argue that theoretical orientation is the predominant determinant of how a teacher approaches the task of teaching reading (DeFord, 1979, 1981; Gove, 1981; Harste & Burke, 1977). Two sources of data, DeFord’s TORP data and lesson plan data, illuminated the impact of policy initiatives and our understanding about good reading instruction (Roller, 2001) from the perspective of theoretical orientation and program change.

DeFord’s TORP data and lesson plan data in this study illuminated some important differences in the theoretical orientation among candidates from different programs. These data were consistent with previous research indicating that many factors have impact on preservice teachers’ theoretical orientation (Duffy & Anderson, 1984; Evans & Johnson, 1991; Gove, 1981; Harste & Burke, 1977; Hoffman & Kugle, 1981; O’Callaghan, 1997; Roos, Dansby-Giles, Brown, & Langley, 1993; Stansell & Robeck, 1979; Wham, 1991). The data also seemed to point to some factors that might have more impact than others might. Specifically, this study points to length of time spent on reading theory, number and length of field experiences, and the components of the literacy portion of the program. TORP data were consistent with previous research (Roos et al., 1993; Strickland, 1990) findings that theoretical orien-

tation was influenced partially by methods courses, but also seemed to be influenced by other factors (Massey, 2002). The syllabi data and faculty interview data suggest that both old and new reading programs had a tendency to be holistic, in that they covered a wide range of literacy topics. The old program had only one reading theory course that was designed to cover all areas of the theory and pedagogy of reading. The new program covered similar topics but had the "luxury of time" (Dr. B) to go into more depth on individual topics. The new program included four reading courses, an integrated social studies language arts course, and 60 hours of field experience. In contrast, the old program had to cover all of reading theory in one 15 week semester and had less than 10 hours of field experience. Candidates who took only one reading theory class (old and hybrid groups) submitted lesson plans that were vague, lacked cohesiveness and did not use literacy terminology. One explanation may be the lack of time spent on reading curricula and in the field in the old program. It is possible that the limited number of courses and field experiences did not allow enough time for candidates to change their "existing schema" (Massey, 2002, p.120). Candidates (old and hybrid) were vague in their approach to reading, possibly indicating a lack of background knowledge available for instructional decisions (Littlefield, 1996; O'Callaghan, 1997; Roos et al., 1993; Stansell & Robeck, 1979; Wham, 1991).

As compared to the other three programs, new program lesson plans focused on the process of reading and reading to learn. This is the only group that took ECE 3330, a course that focused on the following topics: comprehension, using graphic organizers, learning vocabulary, and reading for meaning, learning and pleasure. Candidates from this program chose lesson plans that were more strategy-laden, suggesting the impact of the third literacy course. Also Hybrid-New candidates, who did not take ECE 3330 had a tendency to include phonics as a skill even in grades as high as fifth. Weidler (1989) found that as the preservice teachers' knowledge of literacy terms improved, the implementation of their lessons improved, though not at the same rate as their "knowledge structure." This study extends Weidler's research by demonstrating that the candidates exposed to more literacy course work and field experiences were able to apply this knowledge in their instructional planning; their plans had less of a tendency to focus on single skills and be cohesive and balanced.

A surprising result of this study was the lack of statistical significance found in the Praxis data. Possible reasons include the following: the new program was in the early implementation stages and the study took place in a southern state with predominantly nontraditional older students; a group of students who traditionally do not do well on ETS tests. Finally it could be that the Praxis tests are not testing what we think they are. Lesson plan data showed clear differences in both TOR and PCK in the new group as com-

pared to the three other groups. This would seem to indicate that perhaps the Praxis itself is not sensitive to the topics we teach at the university.

## Limitations of Study

The study's population is limited to one university, which does not have a "typical" population, limiting its generalizability. The study was instituted at the beginning of the program when "kinks" were still being worked out. Lessons were not observed being implemented; a follow-up study that investigates the effectiveness of the implementation of lessons would be beneficial. Interviews and observation with graduates would also yield important data. Sample size for some of the groups for both Praxis and TORP data was relatively small; larger sample sizes would help to show statistical significance and increase generalizability.

## Implications for Teacher Education

These data suggest that teacher educators should recognize the importance of (a) establishing an understanding of the theoretical foundations of various teaching methods, (b) developing an awareness of personal theory and encouraging the expression and building of that theory, and (c) examining the relationship theory has to instructional decision making. Candidates who had more exposure both to theory and field experience seemed to be more adept at instructional planning. These data suggest that teacher educators should recognize that the provision of practical strategies without theory may lead to misimplementation, unless the teachers' beliefs are congruent with the theoretical orientation of the practice (Feng & Etheridge, 1993). Data suggest that teacher educators need to examine the sequence and content of the structure of their programs, especially the importance of providing enough field experiences for candidates to connect theory to practice. Teacher educators may also need to restructure coursework. For example, reading courses could be required to be taken in conjunction with field experiences specifically designed to assess students' literacy and implement diagnostic instruction in the field. This would seem to help bring together candidates' theoretical knowledge base with practical application. The lesson plan data also point to the importance of course components such as field experience and the danger involved in leaving out pieces of the program. This shown in the hybrid-new program where candidates lacked the course focuses on "reading to learn" and therefore seemed to focus more on basic reading strategies such as phonics. Most importantly, these data seem to confirm that candidates' development into successful literacy teachers depends on the theoretical and pedagogical content knowledge they receive in their coursework *and* field experiences.

A final implication for those who are involved in teacher education, whether it be Colleges of Education or government agencies, is the lack of statistical significance among the groups with the two Praxis assessments, despite the significant qualitative differences in the lesson plan data among the same groups. In background reports to federal and state governments, the Educational Testing Service (1998) cautions against drawing conclusions from Praxis data as the sole criterion for evaluation of institutions. Yet, in many states, Praxis assessments are the *de facto* criteria for a candidate receiving teaching credentials. Even those candidates, who have excelled at every measure their Colleges of Education use to ensure they are skilled educators, will be prevented from receiving a teaching license if they miss a passing score by one point on this test. The Praxis and lesson plan data from this study seem to indicate that the ability to pass the Praxis does not always match a candidate's ability to plan thoughtful literacy instruction. Just as governmental agencies have looked at alternative methods to license teachers; it would seem that alternative assessments should be considered when issuing teaching credentials. This is a concern when other data suggest that a candidate has achieved the level of PCK necessary to teach, but may not be able to "pass" a paper and pencil exam. Though more expensive and time consuming, alternative assessments should be available, at least in those cases where the evidence of four years of education does not match the Praxis results. Perhaps looking at alternative assessments similar to National Board Certification for practicing teachers for undergraduates is a possible alternative to paper and pencil tests.

## Final Thoughts

This investigation provides corroborating data to Pearson's (2001) review to refute charges of policy makers that Colleges of Education are no longer relevant to the preparation of teachers. The study investigates the implementation of a state mandated change at the university level and supports the importance of developing programs that support candidates in gaining the theoretical foundations and pedagogical content knowledge of literacy to facilitate candidates' growth into thoughtful adaptive literacy teachers (Burk, 1989; Clay, 1992; Evans & Johnson, 1992; Feng & Etheridge, 1991; Weidler, 1989). Candidates in the new program had a theoretical orientation that was more holistic and cohesive based on data. Even more importantly from the point of view of policy makers, candidates who went through the expanded new program were able to put together balanced and cohesive lesson plans. Candidates from the new program were far more knowledgeable about literacy terminology and processes than candidates from earlier programs. Candidates in the new program, as those in the other programs, are all indi-

viduals with different experiences in the realm of literacy. The current study supports the conviction that coursework and field experience can significantly affect candidates' ability to develop well-planned and balanced literacy instruction. Additional research is necessary to improve reading instruction by providing beginning teachers with the tools necessary to teach all students to read. Additional research is necessary for teacher educators to take an active role in the formation of standards and policies that enhance literacy education through improved researcher-policy maker communication.

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## Appendix A. Lesson Plan Theoretical Orientation Definitions

ORIENTATION	CHARACTERISTICS
Whole	Had an emphasis on whole stories and use of literature. The initial emphasis in teaching reading is on using sense of story for dealing with smaller language units. The primary emphasis is on the story or content
Whole-Skills	Had primary emphasis on whole story but some use of processes that view reading as a processes of learning discrete skills such as vocabulary skills and comprehension skills
Skills	Had an orientation that is moving away from individual sounds toward larger units of language. Emphasis is on building a sight vocabulary and skills. A skills orientation views learning to read as a process of learning discrete and hierarchically arranged vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills, all of which are either focused upon or outgrowths of word recognition or identification
Skills-Phonics	Had the skills orientation but also focused on smaller than word level skills such as names of letters of the alphabetic and the individual sounds of letters

## Appendix B. Interview Questions

1. What was the structure of the old program? Philosophy?
2. What were the strengths of the old program? Weaknesses?
3. Why was the reading program changed?
4. How did the faculty react to the change?
5. What is the philosophy of the new program?
6. What are the fundamental changes in the new program?
7. What are the strengths of the new program? Weaknesses?
8. How do you think the changes have influenced the teacher candidates?

# THE GUIDED LITERATURE LEARNING STRATEGY: THE PROCESS AND AN ANALYSIS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

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## Abstract

*This paper provides an account of the use of the Guided Literature Learning Strategy as a means to address negative views of reading on the part of would-be teachers. The strategy is designed to enable pre-service teachers to engage in aesthetic reading experiences and to reflect critically on those experiences. Using a literature learning log and discussion groups, the authors hoped to impact positively upon students' views of reading. The authors identified three major themes that were discussed in students' reflections: experiencing a love of reading, experiencing critical reading and thinking about implications for future teaching.*

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**I**n a recent study of reading habits and attitudes of pre-service teachers, (Applegate & Applegate, 2004) we found that many would-be teachers have not yet acquired a love of reading. In fact, in many cases, the reading that they had loved in their earliest school days had evolved into a chore that they viewed as essential only to academic success. Many of our students have shared with us that they had chosen elementary education as their profession because they wanted to be able to teach their students differently from the way that they had been taught. But, based on their educational experience, many developed a view of reading as a collection of skills that enables one to extract a series of facts or events from text; consequently, their idea of "teaching differently" was to help children have more fun while they were engaged in these fact finding activities. Because literature was not

thrilling to them, they rarely considered experiences with literature as central to the joy of reading. We came to believe that if we were to help our students achieve the transformations they sought in the teaching of reading, we were obliged to address their fundamental view of reading.

We found that many of our students saw reading as a process far more akin to memorizing facts than to thinking about them. We knew that we would have to help them realize that effective reading is an essentially active process in which readers seek out links between their own past experiences and the ideas they see represented in the text (Anderson, Osborn & Tierney, 1984; Goodman, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978). Effective reading must be seen as an opportunity to share in the experiences, ideas and beliefs of a writer who has taken the time to commit them to writing. And effective reading is not complete until the readers critically respond to the ideas they have encountered, accepting, rejecting or modifying them based on their own unique combinations of ideas, values and experiences.

We sadly concluded that many of the students in our study were extrinsically motivated; the academic success they experienced was worth the discipline that was required to persevere with the chore of reading. We have since had conversations with students who noted that they would rather do anything in their free time than read. This picture was in complete contradiction to our hopes for elementary teachers.

In sharp contrast to some of our students, engaged readers choose to read because of an intrinsic motivation that helps them see a value in reading as a source of enjoyment, a source of satisfaction for their curiosity or as a vehicle for the pursuit of their interests. Engaged readers seem to enjoy the challenge of high level thinking and have an internal belief that reading is an active process of linking text with personal experience. They even use reading to live out other dimensions of life through the characters that populate stories, becoming what has been described as aesthetic readers (Rosenblatt, 1978). These readers would be able to appreciate C.S. Lewis' (1961) reaction that as he read great literature he could be "... a thousand men and yet remain myself . . . I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see" (p.141).

Ruddell (1995) coined the phrase *influential teachers* to refer to those teachers who are highly effective in motivating students to experience the excitement of learning. But he also suggested that influential teachers seem to instinctively recognize the aesthetic nature of reading literature. What he also suggested was that non-influential teachers tend to be those who see reading as strictly *effeient*, focusing on the details of a story without experiencing characters' lives.

Ruddell believed that teachers with a consistently effeient stance would be less likely to see the value in interaction and the exchange of ideas. If the primary objective of effeient readers is to identify ideas that the author wishes

to convey, then the value of discussion and social interaction is minimal. Thus the teacher's view of reading may impact the choice of instructional strategies that may, in turn, play a significant role in the development of reading engagement. Almasi (1996), concerned about fact-dominated classrooms, noted that these classrooms tended to be teacher-dominated classrooms. Such classrooms ignored the evidence that children who had been prepared to engage in peer-led rather than teacher-dominated discussion groups were more likely to engage in higher-level thinking about what they read.

In the final analysis then, it seems that teachers who are themselves engaged and enthusiastic readers are more likely to encourage and cultivate engaged readers in their own classrooms. It is in the classrooms of such teachers that children are more apt to encounter teaching strategies that foster a love for reading and a high level of engagement in reading.

We linked the results of our study to one of the experiences of the Apostle Peter (Acts 3:5) who, when asked for money by a beggar, replied that he could not give what he did not have. We were deeply alarmed that so many of the very people who were charged with the mission of conveying an enthusiasm for reading did not themselves have such an enthusiasm to share.

## Guided Literature Learning Strategy

It is one thing to identify a problem but it is far more important to propose some solutions. To do that, we designed the Guided Literature Learning Strategy or GLLS (Applegate & Applegate, 2005). This instructional strategy was created to give pre-service students the opportunity to observe their own personal growth as aesthetic readers and to use their aesthetic experience as the basis for critical response to literature. The first step in the GLLS is to ask students to read a story and identify their strongest emotional response to it. The second step is to ask the students in the midst of their reflections to discover and identify what fundamental beliefs about life and the human condition that the author is revealing in the course of telling the story. Our students' initial reaction to this part of the assignment is often discomfort; they assume that there is one "correct" reaction and a specific set of "correct" assumptions about the human condition. Our goal in this task is to let them discover the power of their own selective attention and the way in which life experiences serve as the magnets that draw specific story elements to the attention of different readers.

The first story we read is Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), a story of the friendship of two students, Leslie and Jess, who in different ways often find themselves on the fringes of their world. The central event in the story is the untimely death of Leslie and the impact that it has on her friend. Our students come to the class having read the book and are asked

to discuss their strongest emotional reaction to the story and those ideas about the human condition that they saw reflected in the story. Those students who identify Leslie's death as their strongest emotional response often assume that the other discussion participants will do likewise. They are always amazed at the sheer diversity of their peers' reactions. For example, some students respond with anger and frustration that a young life is cut short; others respond with joy in knowing that the youngest sister will become the queen of the imaginary world; some are delighted with the way in which the death has changed the relationship between the father and the son; still others are angered at the unfairness with which Jess is treated by his mother. These differences surprise and delight throughout the discussion but they also include a powerful message about seeing and appreciating differences in reactions to literature.

## Using Three-Dimensional Assumptions About Human Condition to Enhance Critical Thinking

We have found that students' initial comments about the assumptions about the human condition that they believe were conveyed by the author are often restricted to a single theme such as death, imagination, the beauty of friendship, creativity, love of reading, or bullying. It is clear that they will need additional guidance in this second step of the GLLS. After the students discuss their reactions among themselves, we challenge them to expand their fairly simple statements into richer, three-dimensional assumptions about the human condition. Specifically, their task is to identify one of the sketchy themes that they perceived to be powerful and to relate it to another idea or theme in the story. For example, it is common for students to state that Paterson believes that imagination (the result of Leslie's reading of fantasy) leads to creativity. To these two related ideas, they must add a third in order to flesh out their thinking. One example is the realization that Leslie's imagination and creativity enable her to solve problems. After they identify the three themes that are drawn together because of the connecting power of the relationships, they are asked to create a single sentence expressing these connections. An example would be: "Because Leslie used reading as a source of imagination she became creative and used this creativity to solve problems."

A second example of this type of thinking involves Jess. When students discuss Jess, the characteristic they most often emphasize is his difficulty fitting into a group. They often express their frustration with the fact that he is frequently criticized in his home and that this may contribute to his sense of insecurity. We then encourage students to move away from simple statements such as "I was angry at how Jess was treated" and to form a three-dimensional interpretive sentence like "Because Jess is often criticized at home he

has developed a keen sense of insecurity that has contributed to a difficulty fitting into a group.” But in both examples, there is also a final step that is central to critical interpretation. The students must use their own life experiences to determine whether the three-dimensional assumption they have created is specific to the story or part of the human condition. If they conclude that their statement has broader implications, they modify their assumptions to take on a form such as: “Children who live in homes where their parents tend to be extremely critical often develop a sense of insecurity that hinders their ability to be comfortable fitting into a group of peers.” In this way we encourage our students to go beyond the constraints of a specific story and a specific set of characters and to consider the messages about life that the author is attempting to convey.

One additional example may help to clarify this point. Students often identify a poor self concept as the trait that most characterizes Jess’ father. We challenge them to link two more logical concepts with this trait, such as 1) a sense of helplessness in providing for his family, and 2) a tendency to pressure his son to conform to society. Note that once again, we begin by selecting story elements that can be connected because of the relationships between and among them. These ideas serve as the basis for the interpretation of Jess’ father but then must be followed with a critical assessment based on the sum of life experiences to determine if and how this idea can be applied to being human. A sample sentence is: “Parents whose situations in life foster a sense of helplessness, often develop a poor self concept and reflect this by pressuring their children to conform to society’s values.”

As a group we create ten three-dimensional statements. Our objective in this task is to help students make connections in ways they may never have done before. First and foremost, we want them to experience literature by living the lives of the characters, realizing that if they had walked in their shoes, they would probably have many of the same strengths or weaknesses. One of the reasons for our use of *Bridge to Terabithia* is the opportunity readers have to experience Leslie’s love of the *Chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis, 1951-1956) and the strength that reading has provided for her. What is particularly salient is the realization that reading can be infectious. Jess catches the thrill of reading from Leslie and their reading is so aesthetic that together they create the imaginary world of Terabithia, modeled after Narnia, where they can be the King and Queen. Thus the literature selection itself provides a concrete example of aesthetic readers.

While we want students to experience aesthetic reading, we also want the result of that aesthetic reading to be a critical reflection. In other words, while they begin their aesthetic experience living in the setting of the character, we want them eventually to separate themselves from the setting that dominated the character’s life and revert to their own. And in their own set-

ting, they need to interpret the character's life through their own insights; this enables them to determine whether they believe the assumptions about the characters' lives in the story apply not only to a limited slice of life but to the global human condition.

What we hope will happen is that some of our less engaged students will experience reading in a new way, and see with a myriad of eyes, but still be themselves. But they will not stop there; they will, as did Lewis, apply the insights they gained while living in that literary world to their real lives. When they do that, they can become those influential teachers who see the Leslies or Jesses sitting in their classrooms and who truly care about their hurt. They also want to help their students learn to use reading as the bridge to a new life; we believe that teachers can do this more readily when they have looked at life through their students' eyes through the literature they read.

## Reflection Task

Students are then given five additional children's books to read. Three of these books are assigned; the remaining two are selected by group consensus, based on genre preference (see Appendix B). Groups are given one week to read each book. This arrangement ensures that the group composition remains the same for the duration of the project. Their independent task is to create a learning log that begins with a narrative description of their strongest emotional response and then includes 10 three-dimensional assumptions for each of their readings. This response log and assumption list then becomes the basis for their group discussions about the books. Finally, at the end of the semester, we ask them to reflect on their experience participating in the GLLS. At this time, we discuss the goals of self-reflection. We want them now to articulate the impact of their experiences while reading the selections, identifying their strongest emotional responses and preparing the three-dimensional statements that reflect the assumptions about the human condition that they believed were conveyed through the story. We want them to determine whether the experience contributed to a change in their view of reading or in their view of critical thinking. The goal of the GLLS was to provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to experience a love of reading that is also linked with critical thinking. We were hoping that they would apply their understanding of self-reflection to their present role as students and to their future role as teachers. We gave fairly minimal direction in the assignment because we wanted the reflection to include discussion of the ways in which their understanding of literature learning was acquired during a planned aesthetic experience, without our direct solicitation of those ideas. We simply asked students to reflect on their private reading, their log assignment, and their participation in the literature learn-



ing discussions, and to provide examples to support their insights. This written assignment required these pre-service teachers to identify those individual experiences and assumptions that were most salient to them.

### *Written Reflection Highlights*

Our students have expressed a full range of responses to their experiences in using the GLLS. Many express their surprise at how much they enjoyed the reading that they did, and at how much they have grown in understanding the craft of the writer. Many have told us that they had always had been jealous of those English majors who had so many insights that they always managed to miss. Here are four excerpts from student reflections:

Pre-service Teacher One: I truly believe that living vicariously through characters gives readers the ability to infer. The reason why it was so easy to make such wonderful inferences and relate them to personal experiences and specific points of the book was the fact that my reading was not pressured. I never felt once that when I was reading these books I had to be worried about details or highlighting certain things. It may sound contradictory, but by reading for enjoyment through an aesthetic stance and not trying to focus on miniscule details, I actually remembered more. This does not mean that I remembered the exact details that the person next to me remembered, but rather I remembered another portion of the book. This is the beauty that this strategy can capture. We all read for enjoyment through an aesthetic standpoint, selectively attending to different parts. Then during our discussions we were all able to collaborate and discuss what our minds selectively picked out.

Pre-service Teacher Two: I have always liked reading, but there have been so many times that I have been confined to the details in the book. I have missed out on reflecting on the characters by obsessing over these minor details for a test. I had no idea that reading could be so much fun, by interpreting the books, sharing my ideas, and receiving ideas from others in my group. It was interesting to see how other members in my group interpreted an instance in the story differently from how I interpreted it. I was fascinated by their insights and often I found myself reaching for the book again to see if I could see the same concept. If only I would have had a literature learning discussion in my classroom in grammar school, I believe I would have had more of an interest in reading. The literature learning groups will be an essential learning tool to have in my future classroom activities to aid my students in critical thinking and to show them a love of reading.

Pre-service Teacher Three: In this forum (literature learning group), I was able to voice my own thoughts, but also hear the thoughts of three of my peers with three different perspectives. By feeding off of each other, we were all able to take our analysis to the next level. At times, I would form thoughts in response to one of my group-mates that I never would have thought of. Through our public dialogue we transcended the limitation that each of us had individually.

For example, one person in my group shared an assumption that behind a physical journey lies a path for spiritual growth. This I thought was really connected to the story, but then remembering the assumption, I later found that it was relevant to just about every book we had read.

Pre-service Teacher Four: By doing the assumptions while reading the book it was giving me a chance to express some things that usually I would just let sit in my head and then not think about them later. Writing the assumptions gave me a chance to apply what was in the book to either something in my life or to another character from another story. It opened up a window for me to convey some insights that usually would go unheard while reading a book. . . . I have even been able to connect the stories to modern day classes we are taking right now in college. It has made me see that even books for the elementary school level can have adult themes to them; it just takes a little searching to find them. I want to help students make connections between stories and their lives, which will make the story more meaningful. I want to teach reading to my students using this same format. Personally, I know I will never read or look at a story the same way again.

These types of reflections enhance that same type of selective attention as does aesthetic reading. The first example includes specific reference to an aspect of critical thinking, making inferences, and linked with that is reference to both success and pleasure. Finally, the pre-service teacher expresses an awareness of the way in which this type of critical reading enhanced her memory. The pre-service teacher writing the second example refers to her past reading as more of an efferent task, one that involved some drudgery ("obsessing") that seemed to be necessary for academic success. She seems both surprised and pleased at her experience with the freedom to interpret literature; this in turn brought greater pleasure in noting the different ways her peers had interpreted the same story. Finally, she clearly makes reference to her future role as a teacher. The third example reflects the impact of critical thinking enhanced by peer insights during the literature learning discussion group. The third student then provided an example of how she applied a statement about a specific story to all the stories she had read.

Finally, the fourth example demonstrates the role of the log assignment (creating three-dimensional assumptions) in fostering critical thinking, the act of applying insights from a specific story to life. This student also makes note of the realization that this type of analysis does require some mental energy and finally made a clear reference to her future teaching.

An interesting footnote is that many of our pre-service teachers later observed that the creation of the assumptions was primarily a crutch that helped them select, organize, interpret and generalize about story elements. Most agree that they would no longer need the concrete Literature Learning Log assignment because they will never again be able to read in the literal way in which they did when they began the project.

As we discussed above, the Reflection Task was designed to be an open-ended reflection; students were asked to reflect on their private reading, their log assignment, and their participation in the literature learning discussions, and to provide examples to support their insights. This assignment required these pre-service teachers to identify those individual experiences and assumptions that were most salient to them. As we read these written reflections, we began to note several consistent themes running through them. Students often made specific reference to enjoyment or pleasure, critical thinking and plans for future teaching. We wanted to see if our first impressions could be supported by an analysis of these reflections.

## Analysis of Reflections

Approximately 15 years ago, as we read students' reflections following participation in a very loosely structured Literature Learning activity, we began to notice three powerful emerging themes. We were intrigued by the consistency with which these ideas recurred, especially since we had not specifically solicited the students' reactions to any of the themes. First, we had believed that we would be building on a love for reading that students were bringing to their coursework. Instead, we found student after student who reported surprise that reading could be so enjoyable. The second theme we found was that students often reported that their previous experience with literature had been almost exclusively at the literal level. A final pattern of responses centered on the desire of students to teach literature relying heavily on the aesthetic stance. Consequently, we decided that we would engage in a more systematic examination of student reflections to determine if the same patterns emerged on a more regular basis.

For the purpose of this study, we assigned numbers to each of the several hundred reflections of pre-service teachers that we had collected, and then used a table of random numbers to select a sample of 20 reflections. Using a simple rubric as a guide, we analyzed these reflections in light of the

strength of the reference to the three general themes we had found in our earlier readings of reflections: a) experiencing a love of reading, b) experiencing the excitement of critical thinking and c) recognizing their role as teachers. We independently rated each reflection to determine if any of the themes were present and how strong the reference to the theme had been in the body of the reflection. We awarded 4 points to a reflection which included a strong and detailed reference to a theme, 3 points to a reflection that included some reference to the theme, 2 points to a reflection that did not mention the theme, and 1 point to a reflection that expressed a negative reaction to the theme. The reader should note that we did not include in the rubric a 1 point score for the theme of reference to future teaching.

After an initial meeting where we discussed scoring procedures and rubrics and practiced scoring on questionnaires administered to a non-target sample, the two authors scored each reflection independently. We calculated inter-rater reliability on the basis of the percentage of agreement on all reflections for all subjects. The overall inter-rater reliability was 93.7%, a figure inflated by the ease with which several items could be scored. In all cases differences in scoring were resolved by discussion.

After scoring each of the 20 reflections according to the presence or absence of the three themes listed in the rubric (love of reading, critical thinking, and role as future teachers), we calculated an average score (Appendix A). We were particularly pleased that the aggregate score for students' references to excitement with their abilities to think critically suggested that a large proportion of students included at least some reference to the trait in their reflections. We were somewhat disappointed that their unprompted reflections did not include stronger responses about a love of reading (3.175 aggregate score) and still more disappointed that their application to teaching was somewhat lower (3.00 aggregate score). But when we considered that the reflection assignment was very general and non-directive ("Write about your experiences using the GLLS"), we had reason to be pleased.

## Discussion and Conclusions

We concluded that at least some of the scores might be explained in light of the task. We were very strict in our application of the rubric criteria, particularly with regard to a love of reading. For example, pre-service teacher one mentioned that there was enjoyment involved with aesthetic reading but it would be very difficult to rank this response as a 4. Rankings of 4 were associated with responses that clearly articulated aesthetic experiences with a particular book. Another student suggested that if she had had such an aesthetic experience in her classroom during grammar school, then she would have had more of an interest in reading. But this type of a state-

ment reflected a ranking of 3. In fact, our notes show that one of us initially thought that this response should be scored as 2.5 because interest in reading is a bit short of enjoyment in reading.

The second issue is that the task itself required that students analyze their experiences with the aesthetic stance. Since the thrust of the aesthetic stance is the living through of characters' lives it is quite possible that the students saw this process as very akin to critical thinking. It is also clearly possible that students saw the love of reading as something that is not beyond any reader; however, the act of critical reading, for many of our students, was initially perceived to be something beyond them. It is possible that because of their excitement doing something that they had not believed possible, their attention was focused more on the process of critical thinking. Finally, it is also possible that some students focused their attention on their immediate experience with the GLLS, without considering the impact of the experience on their future teaching.

What we found exciting was the fact that 8 of the 20 students included in their reflections (without prompting from us) discussions of how pleased they were to have had a positive experience with reading in light of the very negative feelings that they had about reading when they were younger. It is also significant to note that all eight of these students expressed their desire to teach aesthetically so that their students can experience the joy of reading.

This analysis of students' reflections suggests that it is clearly possible to design instructional activities that will enable pre-service teachers to reflect on the importance of a love of reading. In light of the fact that many pre-service teachers have no experience with a love of reading, it would seem worthwhile for institutions that prepare teachers to identify such students and design instructional experiences to help them acquire what they have missed. They need to become sensitive to the realization that if they, as teachers, have not experienced a love of reading, they will not be able to give one to their students.

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## Appendix A.

*Rubric for Analysis of Written Reflections*

## A. Experiencing a love of reading

- 4 Strong reference regarding personal enjoyment
- 3 Some indication or implication of enjoyment
- 2 No reference made about personal pleasure
- 1 Reference made about lack of enjoyment

## B. Experiencing the excitement of critical thinking

- 4 Strong reference regarding excitement
- 3 Some indication or implication of excitement
- 2 No reference made about personal critical thinking
- 1 Reference made about lack of critical thinking

## C. Recognizing role as teachers

- 4 Strong reference regarding future teaching
- 3 Some indication of potential use as future teacher
- 2 No reference made about future teaching

## Analysis of presence or absence of themes in student reflections

Theme	Mean Score
Love of Reading	3.175
Critical Thinking	3.52
Application to Teaching	3.0

## Change:

- Positive contrast with past experiences 8

## Appendix B.

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### Assignment Selection (week one)

Paterson, K. (1977). *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Scholastic.

### Assigned Selections (weeks two, three and four)

Creech, S. (1994). *Walk two moons*. New York: HarperCollins.

Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars*. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

### Choice Selections—by Genre (weeks five and six)

#### *Critical Contemporary:*

Paterson, K. (1978). *The great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: HarperCollins. or

Paulsen, G. (1987). *Hatchet*. New York: Simon & Schuster. or

Byars, B. (1977). *Pinballs*. New York: HarperCollins.

#### *Historical Fiction:*

Paterson, K. (1989). *Park's quest*. New York: Penguin Books. or

Fleischman, S. (1986). *Whipping boy*. New York: Troll Communications.

Voigt, C. (1985). *Jackaroo: A novel of the kingdom*. New York: Atheneum.

#### *Modern Fantasy:*

Lewis, C.S. (1950). *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe*. New York: HarperCollins. or

O'Brien, R. C. (1971). *Mrs. Frisby and the rats of NIMH*. New York: Simon & Schuster. or

Banks, L. R. (1980). *Indian in the Cupboard*. New York: Avon Books.



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**BUILDING BRIDGES OF LEARNING  
TO READ THROUGH WRITING**

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# BOOK MICROSCOPES: THE EFFECTS OF STUDENT COMPLETION OF GUIDED TASKS TO PROMOTE L2 WRITING EXPERTISE AS AN OUTGROWTH OF L2 READING

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## Abstract

*In this study fifth and sixth grade English language learners (ELLs) utilized reading as the basis of writing. Students completed different types of writing activities based on the context of the books they read and the connection between these and their lives. Besides teacher coaching and modeling, students used visual prompts. Pre-study interviews were compared to post-study student self-evaluations to assess learners' knowledge base and metacognitive stances before and after the intervention. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis of student writing samples indicate extensions of the second language reading process consisting of guided writing tasks facilitate the writing process for ELLs.*

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## State of Affairs

In America's classrooms, 9.6% of students are English language learners (ELLs) (NCES, 2002). This demographic requires monolingual mainstream teachers to develop curricula for classes that often include speakers of several different languages. Learning English as a second language (ESL) is a challenge not yet overcome by the ELL populations that have consistently shown lower high school and college graduation rates (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). If preparation of these students falls short, then the country's educators are not meeting the needs of the business community. A revised paradigm of instruction must be developed to help ELLs.

Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), although laden with good intentions, is not effectively addressing the educational needs of ELLs or asking schools to meet the standards set by the Castaneda decision (Castaneda v.

Pickard, 1981). Programs are not being implemented effectively, are not all based on sound research, and are not evaluated and modified to help ELLs defeat language barriers (Castaneda v. Pickard). Learning a second language (L2) is a task that cannot be accomplished overnight. NCLB places its emphasis on short-term test results. Schools that do not meet standards set by NCLB are quickly placed on probation. This legislation “. . . is narrowing the curriculum, encouraging excessive amounts of test preparation, undercutting best practices based on scientific research, demoralizing dedicated educators, and pressuring schools to abandon programs that have proven successful (Crawford, 2004, p. 2).

Clearly, in many ways the schoolhouse is being forced to prepare ELLs to take tests rather than to succeed in academic endeavors that require high levels of critical thinking. ELLs face many academic challenges at school. They must learn to speak, understand, read, and write academic English. Although many ELLs can complete simple writing tasks, academic learning is a more complex task. The greater instructional challenge faced by ELLs is to learn to express complex thoughts in American writing style as is necessary to succeed in school (Casanave, 1994; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Scott & Rodgers, 1995; Silva, 1990; Uzawa, 1996). Educators must design curricula that better assists these learners to transfer existing literacy in the home language to English, and begins by examining what learners know. This must be done through whatever means expedite the process even if it does yield the quick results mandated by NCLB.

## Theoretical Framework

Research has shown that acquisition of a second language and grade-level bilingual literacy is a process that takes from four to seven years (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1988; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000), if not longer. Development of biculturalism or the ability to interact efficiently in two socio-cultural environments is a factor that contributes to or impedes second language acquisition (SLA). Achievement of a bicultural way of being cannot adequately be measured through standardized testing due to the ethereal quality of the affective domain. The literature on second language acquisition indicates that the ELL who is feeling stress will put up walls that prevent comprehension, negotiations, and creation of meaning (Krashen, 2003). Brain research strongly evidences that human beings take all information in through the amygdala, which is the emotional, simpler, less sophisticated part of the human brain (Caine & Caine, 1991; Wolfe & Brandt, 1998). Therefore, educators must develop brain compatible instruction for ELLs (Goleman, 1995). These curricula should address what research suggests to be effective instructional practices for learners striving to learn a second language.

### *Theories of Second Language Acquisition*

SLA theories acknowledge that learning is expedited when the student optimizes and chooses the direction input and output will take. Although the instructor is a contributor to what occurs in the classroom setting, it is the student's participation, negotiations, and perception of the learning situation that are crucial to acquisition. Teachers must adapt instruction to their learners and accept that prescriptive lesson plans (Daniel, 2002) that espouse a one-cure-for-all are ineffective.

Studies have focused on teaching ESL learners to implement strategies in the classroom with the goals of developing self-regulation and of successfully exiting from programs of instruction. Limited research has focused on the possibility that unconscious processes of learners engaged in L2 writing could be a focus of instruction that helps ELLs combine conscious and unconscious learning processes to facilitate L2 acquisition.

SLA theories have examined the development of L2 writing skills only from the perspective of first primary language writing processes. Silva (1990) examined 72 studies to compare the writing of native speakers of English to that of ELLs. This analysis led him to state that L2 writing is a new area of inquiry that has been based on "monolingual, monocultural, and ethnocentric theories" (p. 669). Silva concluded that there is a need for research that will lead to the development of multilingual multicultural theories of L2 writing.

One could argue that effective application of SLA theories in the reading and writing classroom is pedagogy that is focused on (1) the learner as a leader in the instructional process, (2) collaboration between learners, (3) synthesis of prior knowledge and new material, (4) meaning making through negotiated interactions, (5) development of automaticity, (6) procedural knowledge, (7) awareness of the overlap between conscious and unconscious processes, (8) scaffolded contextualized instruction, (9) application of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio affective strategies by learners and, (10) as of yet unidentified factors (Daniel, 2002).

In addition, when one holds that learning to speak, read, and write a second language (L2) is a recursive process, and that there are connections between reading and writing (Samway & Taylor, 1993), innovations in L2 writing instruction must be based on the recursiveness of the SLA process and the contribution of student collaboration. Informal conversations help ELLs scaffold tasks using their prior knowledge (Dyson, 1993). Collaboration supports reading comprehension, and writing development. When students experiment with language, knowledge is transformed (Galda, Cullinan, and Strickland, 1997). This is because as L2 readers transact with text, they use elements from what they are reading in their writing (Goodman, 1996).

## Learning to Write in English

ELLs face numerous obstacles when learning to write in English (Chern, 2003). In the sociopsycholinguistic view of reading, it is a premise that the person's ability to negotiate meaning in text is innate and can be acquired. When constructing meaning, readers "... use their prior knowledge from three linguistic systems: graphophonics, syntax, and semantic." (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 26). For ELLs, a positive factor in English acquisition is the use of prior experiences. ELLs need to examine new vocabulary, predict, fill gaps in information, confirm or disconfirm predictions, and integrate new acquired knowledge into the old (Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

Roadblocks to biliteracy relate to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Cultural nuances that regulate thought patterns can impede comprehension. A limited lexicon can lead ELLs to experience frustration. True cognates between languages facilitate understanding while false cognates confuse learners. All languages are not alphabetical. Word order is not the same across languages. All languages do not use articles. Composition in English requires the writer to consider the reader and to present ideas in a manner that makes the thoughts of the writer easy to understand. In many parts of the world, writing is indirect and often includes sentences that Americans would label run-on.

It is for all the aforementioned reasons that the task of learning to write in English is a difficult one for the many populations who immigrate to the United States. To complicate matters, learners do not all enter this country's schools with identical levels of home language literacy. Also, children of foreign parents who are born in this country face different challenges in literacy. Many of these students have oral proficiency but low levels of literacy in the home language.

Clearly, ELLs require a different type of writing instruction than that offered to the native born English speaker. Along with acquisition of vocabulary, conventions, and rules of grammar, ELLs need to learn strategies and be taught in non-threatening ways (Krashen, 2003).

### *Teachers' roles*

Before progress can be brought about, the role and contribution of teachers in the learning situation must be more clearly understood. It is important that studies such as this be conducted so that the schoolhouse can find ways to assist all linguistic minorities to read and write English. A teacher's actions and demeanor may create a bond between teacher and student that results in classroom interactions where English acquisition is expedited. Classroom research that concerns itself with gains and losses in standardized test scores does not address the impact of the teacher's interpersonal interactions with students as eliciting or submersing learners' cognitive changes in any given

direction. The teacher's understanding of his/her role and comprehension of how growth in student knowledge comes about delimits all activities. Teachers may perceive SLA theories as philosophical wanderings that are inapplicable in the classroom (Daniel, 2001). If so, the distance between practice and theory leads to instruction that is not developed from a sound theoretical base.

It is in studies like this one that teachers can try new methodology in their efforts to make schools productive and welcoming for ELLs. Teachers must investigate paths to learning that extend beyond the curricular models in textbooks that offer prescriptive classroom activities. Research must help teachers delve into what their role is as instructional designers.

## Introduction to this study

Instruction during this study focused on improving students' English writing per recommendations of the existing literature. Instruction was content based language instruction (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). This means students were not taught skills in isolation but through the use of materials that engaged the learner in higher level thinking skills. The goal was that students learn in a L2 while engaged in construction of meaning. This distinction is important. The ELLs would learn English while engaged in authentic learning. In addition, a component of this intervention focused on increasing student self-reflection and metacognitive skills. Each step of the Book Microscopes was designed to (1) increase student awareness of their knowledge base, (2) understand how learners seek to comprehend text, (3) identify the reasons students approach writing tasks as they do and, (4) facilitate reading and writing in a low stress environment.

Although the focus of this study was to improve ELLs' writing, this goal could not have been addressed if reading had not provided the context for writing. Reading strategically was the foundation of the students' writing. The ELLs used the four language skills recursively as they read, listened to and spoke with each other during collaborative tasks, and composed. Reading and writing were meaningful, authentic, and manageable for the learners. The students wrote as they negotiated meaning within the social world of the classroom (Vygotsky, 1987) and made connections to their lives and prior experiences. As the students read and were exposed to proper English, they had the opportunity to subconsciously acquire rules of grammar and syntax. Comprehensible input was present for the ELLs due to teacher coaching and modeling, and the use of visuals and diagrams that were the basis of strategy instruction.

The eight pragmatic tasks of this study ask learners to focus on books and collaborate to complete a variety of composing tasks in English. The students used some visual prompts from the *CALLA Handbook* (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994) as a guide. Students were also provided with other prompts

designed by the researcher. The steps required the students to read to write (to read for the purpose of writing) in English. One of the classroom walls was decorated with a poster of each step of the Book Microscopes and each student was given a bookmark with small visuals. Refer to Figure One for posters.

The intervention engaged the students in a combination of holistic and skill-based tasks. All work focused on increasing meaning making and comprehension. As students wrote they considered factors of grammar, sentence structure, engaged in vocabulary exploration, evaluated text, and noted how well they expressed ideas when they wrote in English. Students were encouraged to incorporate non-language dependent ways of showing knowledge as a first step to planning composition. Use of the first language was allowed because it helped learners to transition from the known to the unknown.

In the Book Microscopes, the writing process is facilitated by the reading to write process (reading for the purpose of writing). This study (1) takes the students through recursive thinking processes, (2) fosters collaboration, (3) requires the preparation of products that ask the participants to objectively describe, critically examine, analyze, interpret and judge text and, (4) showcases student work.

Figure 1. Students' Diorama with Posters of Steps of Book Microscopes in the Background.



## Methodology

### *Participants*

For this study, the researcher engaged a graduate student who was a bilingual teacher in a fifth/sixth grade class. This first-year teacher was interested in helping her ELLs improve their writing skills in English. The teacher was a native born American who spoke Spanish.

Eleven students whose primary language was Spanish participated in this study from beginning to end. The five female and six male subjects ranged in age from 10-12. Eight students were born in Mexico and three in the United States to parents of Mexican descent. Eight students qualified for free lunch.

### *Setting*

This study took place in a rural Illinois community of about 35, 000 that was approximately one and a half hours from Chicago, Illinois. Demographics revealed a 27.6% mobility rate for the school, and that 14% of students in the school district were Hispanic, 1.5 % Asians, and 6.3% ELLs. Thirty-seven and a half percent of the student population was low income. On the Illinois Student Achievement Test, the writing score for the school where this study took place was under the average score for the State of Illinois (Illinois School Report Card, 2004). In this school all ELLs took the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) (State of Illinois, 1999). This is a test given to ELLs which measures academic progress and ability to communicate in English. IMAGE results for the students in this school were low; 18.2%, as compared to the state average of 39%.

### *Limitations*

This study's population was limited to 11 students in one school whose primary language is Spanish. Although results strongly suggest the Book Microscopes were beneficial to students, ability to generalize is limited due to the small number of participants and their homogeneity.

### *Study Design*

**Pre-Study Interviews.** Before beginning this study, interviews with all participants were completed to find out what the students' knowledge base was before beginning the study. Questions addressed the students' metacognitive awareness and ability to discuss the reading and writing processes. At times, Spanish was used to make certain students understood the questions. Questions incorporated words such as paraphrase, summarize, and revise because it was important to find out if the students understood these concepts. Information gathered in the interviews was used to identify areas that needed to be addressed in the Book Microscopes.

Some of the questions the students were asked were:

1. When you read a book, how do you know which characters are the more important characters?



2. What do you do when you are reading a book and you come across a word that you don't know?
3. When you write a book report, how do you decide what you will write?
4. Do you check/reread your writing after you write to see if someone else could understand what you wrote?

### *Post-Study Self-Evaluation*

A self-assessment protocol was developed to uncover what value the students themselves thought they derived from completion of the Book Microscopes. For triangulation, this consisted of three sections that in different ways asked the same questions. The students were asked if they understood the words summarize, paraphrase, proofread, predict, and plot. Questions with the choice of yes or no answers addressed other issues related to the purpose of this investigation. Students were asked if during the study they collaborated, drew diagrams, reread text, skimmed text, proofread and made certain what was written was clearly understood, learned new words, planned before composing, and could predict what the content of a text might be.

### *Analyses of Student Writing*

A comparison of pre and post-study writing samples calculated the effects of this intervention on student writing using SPSS. The IMAGE rubric was also used to triangulate the writing samples. It was used because it is a holistic rubric that examines the quality of student writing in five categories and places the greater emphasis on comprehension rather than isolated, discrete skills. These approaches to analysis are appropriate because they provide qualitative and quantitative analyses measures.

The IMAGE rubric first considers how the writing demonstrates the student's level of language acquisition. Secondly, it asks if the subject, theme, or unifying event in the writing is clear. Thirdly, it notes if the writer has explained the main points through evidence, detailed reasons, and elaboration. Fourthly, it examines how thoughts are presented and if the text plan is clear and connected. Lastly, the rubric considers mechanics. All categories are rated from one to six points except mechanics, which is rated as one or two.

The overarching question that guided this study was:

1. Will completion of the Book Microscopes improve ELLs' ability to write in English?

In addition, the following hypotheses guided this investigation:

1. There will be an increase in the number of words in the sentences written by students.
2. There will be an increase in the average word length of the sentences written by students.

3. There will be an increase in the number of sentences that contain a subject, verb, and object.
4. There will be an increase in the number of sentences that episodically explain and/or refer to the same antecedent.
5. There will be a decrease in the number of sentence fragments.
6. There will be a decrease in the number of non-linear sentences.
7. There will be a decrease in the number of incomprehensible sentences.

## Procedure

This study analyzed the ways students can be helped to produce L2 writing when (1) reading serves as the basis of authentic L2 writing tasks, (2) students collaborate, (3) students are permitted to use the primary language to improve communication and comprehension, and (4) writing tasks are broken down into manageable chunks. During the Book Microscopes the students completed the activities described in the following steps:

### *Step 1: Prediction*

The students work in groups of two to four students to brainstorm the development of a cover for their Book Microscope. They do this without having read the book. They look at the book's cover, skim through the book, look at chapter titles, and make predictions. The goal is that students make bright, creative, individual covers and that as they do this, the students use their background knowledge, visualize where the book might take them,

Figure 2. Poster Highlighting Step 1



and develop a sense of purpose. This portion of the task is highlighted by a crystal ball (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). In Step 1, the students predict what or whom they think the book will be about, where the action might take place, and why the book promises to be interesting. Refer to Figure 1 for the prompt used for this step.

### *Step 2: Character Description*

As the students read the book, they write a description of two to three pages in length of the characters in the book. If a character is introduced in Chapter One the student begins with this character in Chapter One and documents the character's development throughout the book. Step 2 asks the students to examine/analyze the characters. They may see connections between the characters. They may define their own personal relationship to the characters through identified similarities or differences between the characters and themselves. The word echo serves to remind the students to make connections from the book to their lives (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

### *Step 3: Plot*

The students lay out the plot of the book. The plot is defined as a look at the action or the main events presented by the author. In this step the student is not asked to speculate or explain the reason an event occurs. The student objectively describes what he/she sees taking place in the story. The student may explore the plot chapter by chapter or for the book as a whole. In Step 3 the students use the book's vocabulary to summarize and paraphrase. The image of a magnifying lens helps the student to dig down to see what is happening on the surface and below the surface.

### *Step 4: Summary*

The student writes a detailed summary of the book that is a personal interpretation of text. Step 4 differs from step 3 because the student focuses on the reasons events in the book unfold as they do. The summary may be written progressively as the book is read chapter by chapter, or prepared looking at the entire book. The summary must be clearly written so that someone who has not read the book can figure out what takes place in the book and what is/is not important. In this step the student is provided with two types of prompts. First, prompts in the form of words that begin sentences serve to guide the student to develop the written summary. The prompts present questions such as "As I read this book I wondered why . . .", and "When I think about what happened in this book . . ." Secondly, the image of a pair of glasses serves as a visual reminder to the student that close inquiry is necessary for completion of this step (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

### *Step 5: Book Review*

In the fifth part of the Book Microscope the students write a Review of the Book. They rate the book from one to five stars. Reviews from the Chicago Tribune newspaper are used to coach the students. The students begin this step by reviewing a television shows and deciding if it warrants recommendation. The image of a newspaper serves as a visual reminder to the student of the task at hand. Refer to Figure 2 for the prompt used for this step.

Figure 3. Poster Highlighting Step 5 Book Review



### *Step 6: Vocabulary Exploration*

The student may begin this step at any point in the continuum of the Book Microscope. The purpose of this step is to promote acquisition of new vocabulary. The student is required to choose a minimum of 10 words. The ELL may define the words or use them in a sentence as long as it is not a sentence that comes directly from the book. The students collaborate to decide which words merit attention. A picture of three coffee cups with the word coffee written in English, Spanish, and French serve to remind the students that words across languages may be true or false cognates (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

### *Step 7: Theme*

For this step the student is required to write the theme of the book. The student understands the theme is the message the author is trying to present. The theme for this project is defined as the main idea of the book and is therefore, neither a summary nor a paraphrasing of events. The theme is the student's interpretation of the overarching message the author chose to convey to readers.

### *Step 8: Extension Activities*

In this step the students engage in extension activities of their choice such as Puppet Theater, creation of an illustrated big book, preparation of a poster, etc. These activities serve to further provide a medium for student self-expression (Atwell, 1987; Tompkins, 1997). Refer to Figure 3 for the prompt used for this step.

Figure 4. Poster Highlighting Extension Activities of Step 8

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## Results

### *Pre- Study Interviews*

Student answers to interview questions helped the researcher to plan instruction for participants during the Book Microscopes. For example, the interviews uncovered that most of the students did not have a dictionary at home. Some students shared that when they need help understanding a word, they may have to go to the next-door neighbor to use a dictionary.

One interview question turned out to be particularly revealing. When the students were asked how they write a book report, answers provided information that indicated the type of instruction needed would be addressed in the intervention. Student answers ranged from statements such as "You write some words" or "It's hard to decide what to write" to "I think about what happened at the beginning or the middle or the solution." One student commented that "Sometimes you forget and you have to go back and read two or three times." This student's words showed that appropriate instruction allows an ELL to think and write about the text during reading. This student shared that if he does not do this he forgets what he reads.

In the interviews it became evident that none of the students understood the meaning of the words paraphrase, summarize, or what makes part of a

text meaningful. Nevertheless, they were able to explain the plot of a book that they had read after the concept of the word plot was explained to them. The students shared that important characters are those who “talk a lot.” The interviews also indicated that to the students, revision was a new concept. They thought it meant correcting spelling errors; not evaluating the message in writing. This was an important revelation of what the focus of their previous educational experiences had been.

### *Post-Study Self-Evaluation Results*

Student answers indicate that the students learned the meaning of terms related to the reading and writing processes. None of the ELLs asked to have the words proofread, paraphrased, or summarized/explained. Table 1 presents the results of students’ self-evaluations.

Table 1. Student Self Evaluations Post-Study

	YES	No
I collaborated with friends	100%	
I drew pictures of the story	100%	
I reread what I wrote	73%	27%
I skimmed the book	54%	46%
I used what I knew before	73%	27%
I summarized	50%	50%
I checked what I wrote to see if it made sense	50%	50%
I paraphrased what the book characters said	73%	27%
I learned new words	100%	
I planned before writing	37%	63%
I predicted as I read	54%	46%

### *IMAGE*

Comparison of student writing with the holistic IMAGE rubric shows the greater improvement in organization and support/elaboration. The lowest gain was in mechanics. Refer to Table 2 for this analysis.

Table 2. Analysis with IMAGE Rubric

CATEGORIES	MEAN VALUE PRE-STUDY	MEAN VALUE POST-STUDY
Focus	3.0	3.54
Language proficiency	2.63	3.0
Support/Elaboration	2.45	3.45
Organization	1.90	2.90
Mechanics	1.63	1.90
Total Score	11.63	14.81

*Note: Maximum Score Possible 6.0*

*Minimum Score Possible 1.0*

### *Comparisons of Writing Samples*

Data analysis of student writing samples for pre and post-study showed a slight improvement in all but one post-study mean value. The number of incomprehensible sentences is the only factor that at first glance appears skewed. This value increased from .27 to .54. This increase may be related to the students' level of English language proficiency and thus reflects greater experimentation by students. Pre-study writing samples were short as compared to those gathered during the study. Refer to Table 3 for the comparison of the student writing samples.

Pre and post-study comparisons revealed small but obvious improvement in the post-study values for total number of sentences, for sentences with subject, verb, object word order, and for sentences that refer to the antecedent. Analysis of the writing samples also showed a decrease in the number of sentence fragments, a decrease in the number of run-on sentences, and an increase in the number of words in sentences. There were significant correlations between analyses of student writing samples. Table 4 shows correlations of .839 between language proficiency and student ability to focus, .875 between focus and elaboration, and .943 for sentences with subject, verb, object, and sentences that refer to a clear antecedent support an explanation of greater experimentation by students in writing tasks.

Table 3. SPSS Analysis of Sentences

ITEM	MEAN VALUE PRE-STUDY	MEAN VALUE POST-STUDY
Total Number	5.72	6.09
S, V, O	2.90	3.63
Explain Antecedent	3.09	3.72
Fragments	.81	.54
Run-On	1.72	1.54
Incomprehensible	.27	.54
Number of Words	10.03	9.39
Words Excluding Subjects with all run-ons	11.03	12.92

*Note: Mean Values for number of words in sentences exclude fragments and run-ons*

Table 4. Correlations

	EPISODICALLY EXPLAIN ANTECEDENT	S, V, O	IMAGE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY	IMAGE FOCUS	IMAGE SUPPORT/ ELABORATION
Episodically Explain Antecedent		.943**			
S, V, O	.943**				
IMAGE Language Proficiency				.839**	
IMAGE Focus			.839**		.875**
IMAGE Support/ Elaboration				.875**	

*Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)*



## Discussion and Conclusions

Jerry (a pseudonym), the teacher in whose classroom this study was conducted, shared that the Book Microscopes posed a challenge with select students. Although he felt the steps helped the students to focus, he said implementation of the steps was “Difficult due to the mobility of students.” This is not new information as student mobility is an ongoing challenge for teachers of ELLs. However, the steps of this project could be implemented with short readings instead of books.

In the formation of student groups, Jerry allowed the students to choose their groups and they did so mostly by gender. During the project, he saw that the girls seem to work on this better than the boys. He concluded that this “worked against me because the boys were more off task than if they had been put into coed groups.” There was collaboration between learners but there could have been more if the groups had been heterogeneous.

Jerry noticed that the students did not quite understand Step 4. This statement leads one to conclude these ELLs had not engaged in work that asked their opinion before this study. Evidently, they wrote book reports in which they reported events but never questioned why anything took place, or attempted to justify the development or actions of the characters. Jerry’s statement supports the information gathered in the pre-study interviews. The ELLs in this study had engaged in rote learning and had not been in classrooms run from a constructivist perspective. This is alarming. The cultural mismatch that ELLs experience can impede learning if it is not addressed. Rote learning does not help ELLs feel a sense of belonging.

Data analysis suggests the tasks of this study are beneficial to ELLs. The most improvement was in student ability to offer support and to elaborate. It is encouraging that this category showed improvement. Perhaps the scaffolded instruction of the steps made composing more manageable. ELLs who lack vocabulary often communicate in short phrases that do not allow them to present their ideas. There was an increase in the number of incomprehensible sentences. This result could be evidence of greater risk taking by the students and thus be a positive outcome.

Pre-study writing samples were short. As the students became more comfortable composing, or because they were experiencing less stress, they wrote more. Their writing was far from perfect, but their ideas were comprehensible. That writing production increased for learners, some with low levels of English language proficiency, which is good. This suggests the ELLs were not so busy trying to understand English that little time was left for content. Although they wrote in imperfect English, they were able to express their ideas. They focused on context and on making meaning. This is exactly what good educators of ELLs want in instruction.

It is this qualitative data that can do much to inform instructional plan-

ning and supports the premises of this study. For example, Julio, an ELL who struggles to express himself, wrote a book review that is comprehensible even though it has errors in spelling and punctuation. Julio's words demonstrate his efforts. Sometimes he spells a word two different ways.

The book was boring on the biginig of the book. I realy don't know way (why) was boring on the bigining. In the middle of the book was funy and fun now I like't beter. I do recomed people to read the book but myby willd be a little hard.

The routines of the steps appear to have engaged the students in the assignments. Just as reading helps a learner get into the habit of reading, writing can become part of a routine that can be perfected over time in a low stress situation. The ELLs in this study appear to write very much the same way that they speak. They write as if taking short breaths that do not signal the end of one idea nor the beginning of another. Their thoughts are not expressed in complete sentences that begin and end with correct punctuation. For example, Alina wrote, "She is nice because she cares about animales because the dog was going to go to the pound but she did not let them." Mirta wrote, "It maks me fale like me wan I had my first dog hir in the USA and I't was enstrseting becas it takals about a girl and a dog and that maks fele like me and my dog." In English this would correctly translate to "It makes me feel like I felt when I had my first dog here in the US. It was interesting because the book talks about a girl and a dog. This makes me think of myself and my dog." These examples evidence the challenges of transferring oral proficiency to comprehensible writing.

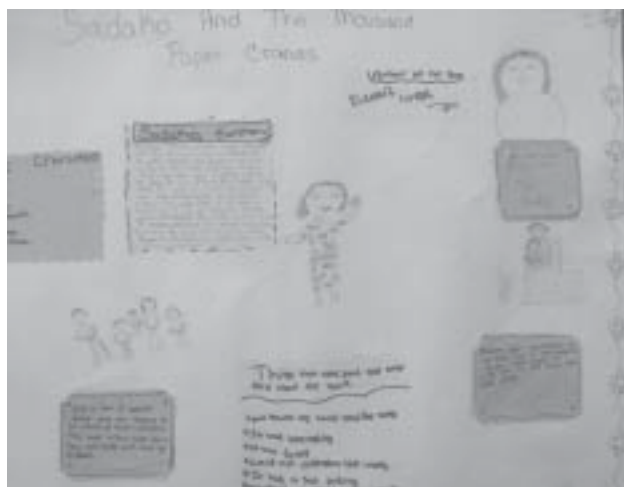
### *Implications for the classroom*

Attainment of biliteracy is an arduous task. However, there is much that mainstream and ESL teachers can do to help ELLs. Teachers can consider what they know of first language literacy before they plan instruction for ELLs. Results of this investigation offer several implications for helping linguistic minority populations.

First, connections between reading and writing are numerous, important for instruction, and helpful. Learning to write in a L2 is facilitated when reading offers the context for composing. The ELL's interest is absorbed by meaning rather than on what he/she cannot understand. Secondly, use of the first language helps students to scaffold knowledge through informal conversations, validates the learner's background and knowledge base, and plans instruction from an additive and not a deficit perspective. Thirdly, collaboration and preparation of non-language dependent diagrams facilitate subconscious planning before writing and offer appropriate instruction for learners with low levels of English proficiency. Fourth, simpler and shorter types of writing tasks appear to help ELLs produce more and concentrate on understanding con-

tent. Lastly, ELLs, just like monolingual students, enjoy taking what they know and creating dioramas, big books, or posters. These post-reading activities extend the reading of a text and contribute to the recursiveness of the reading and writing processes. This is important for ELLs because it reinforces both context and language. With L2 learners, repetition and application are crucial in achievement of biliteracy. Refer to Figure 5 for one student group's poster of Eleanor Coerr's (1977) *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*.

Figure 5. Extension Activity by Team of Two Students



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# NONLINEAR NONFICTION WRITING AND THE I-CHART: SCAFFOLDING FOR SUCCESS

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## Abstract

*I-charts were developed by Hoffman (1992) and their efficacy for writing reports tested by Viscovich (2002). This article describes the results of a classroom intervention in two fourth grade classrooms where students worked in pairs over a period of two weeks to research and write texts suitable for classroom publication. The students read and comprehended various information texts; gathered and organized their information using an I-chart; synthesized across texts by transforming their written notes from the I-chart into connected prose; and incorporated their text into a page design using headings, subheadings, pictures, and captions.*

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The International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts (1996) address reading and writing nonfiction in several ways. The standards suggest that students should “read a wide range of print and non-print texts . . . to acquire new information” (p. 1) and that students should “conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions . . . and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience” (p. 2). In particular, the Utah Language Arts Core Curriculum (Utah Office of Education, 2003) includes the following objective:

4040-0801 Objective 1: Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas (prewriting).

d. Use a variety of graphic organizers to organize information. (p. 51)

The I-chart is a particular type of graphic organizer that was developed by Hoffman (1992) as a way to scaffold students' critical thinking and to consider multiple sources of information rather than looking to just one text

for information. The I-chart takes the form of a data grid or chart that allows students to record what they already know about a topic, to record answers to guiding questions answered after reading several texts or viewing sources, and to write a summary of what was learned from the readings/viewings. Topics and questions can first be determined by the teacher, and after students are familiar with using the I-chart, the students can assume more control over choice of topic and guiding questions. I-charts also help students learn to write organized reports with paragraphs that follow the subtopics provided by the guiding questions and facilitate the process of synthesizing across texts.

Viscovich (2002) compared I-charts to the traditional outline and graphic organizer (in the form of a semantic map or web) to determine their effects on student writing. In her quasi-experimental study, she used six intact classes of predominantly White, affluent fifth graders, which were then randomly assigned to one of the three instructional conditions. As a pretest, all three groups first wrote reports on Charles Lindbergh without using any organizational structure. Then each group was instructed in the use of their assigned organizational structure. The students chose from a list of 25 famous Americans who they wanted to write a report about, with teacher guidance they formulated guiding questions, and finally, they took notes and wrote their final report, which served as the posttest. Reports were scored using New York State's English Language Arts Rubric for Reading/Writing. Of the three instructional conditions, the I-chart was most effective in improving student writing and critical thinking, with an effect size of .76, which means that the I-chart group gained about three-fourths of a standard deviation more than the other two groups combined.

I did an informal survey of reading and language arts methods textbooks for preservice teachers and found only five (out of 15) that mentioned the I-chart as a useful strategy for reading and writing informational texts (Alverman & Phelps, 2005; Gunning, 2005; Reutzel & Cooter, 2003; Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2005; Tierney & Readence, 2005). The most detailed explanation for how to use an I-chart is offered by Tierney and Readence (2005). They explain its origins in the work of Hoffman (1992), McKenzie (1979), and Ogle (1986). Nearly all of the textbooks mention the teacher research done by Randall (1996) in which she adapted the I-chart into separate source pages for each research question to facilitate its use for her eighth graders as they wrote research reports.

Because the I-chart seemed to me to be underused and perhaps undervalued, I decided to use the work of Viscovich (2002) and Hoffman (1992) as my theoretical and research framework to conduct a classroom intervention in two fourth grade classrooms in which the students worked in pairs over a period of two weeks to research native animals of Utah and to produce written work suitable for classroom publication. My instruction included

examining the features of nonfiction texts through read-aloud and explicit instruction, think-aloud comprehension modeling, modeling the use of an I-chart to gather information from sources, and modeling writing in a nonlinear format. The students successfully engaged in a broad range of reading and writing tasks including comprehending the information texts, gathering and organizing their information on I-charts, situating their learning through connecting with prior knowledge, synthesizing across texts by transforming their written notes into connected prose, and incorporating their text into a page design that used headings, subheadings, pictures, and captions.

One of the main advantages of the I-chart as a graphic organizer is that the information the students record in each column is easily converted to paragraphs, which makes their writing more coherent and organized. The I-chart also facilitates synthesizing different sources of information when writing. Outlining is very linear and not as generative as either the I-chart or semantic webbing. Semantic webbing is generative, but lacks the structure of an I-chart. It is the structured nature of the I-chart that makes it such a useful scaffold for student writing.

## Instructional Methods and Materials

I was a guest in Kacee Ure's and Amy Christensen's fourth-grade classrooms in an elementary school in Logan, Utah. Unlike the students in Viscovich's (2002) research, the population of students at this school includes a high percentage of low SES students and approximately 25% Hispanic students. I was volunteering in their classrooms as part of an overall cooperative effort between Utah State University and the local city school district. My intention was to model effective writing instruction practices for these teachers who had specifically requested "help" with writing from their curriculum supervisor in the district office.

I wanted to demonstrate the power of collaborative writing and informational writing to get students engaged in writing. I had successfully taught first- and second-graders to read from informational texts and write their own informational books (Read, 2001) and through my analysis of their talk had seen how the act of collaborating had allowed them to talk through their comprehension of source texts and enhanced their writing process. The fourth-graders seemed more than ready to learn how to gather information from source text and write their own informational texts, given an instructional process that included careful planning, modeling, and support during the writing process.

I began my planning process by examining the fourth-grade science curriculum and identifying an engaging topic—native animals of Utah. In Mrs. Ure's classroom, I created the I-chart (see Table 1) that we would use

Table 1: I-Chart for Mrs. Ure's Class

	What does it look like?	What does it eat?	Does it come out at night or during the day?	How does it protect itself from danger (does it run or fight)?	Does it hibernate or migrate?	How does it find shelter?	Is it endangered or protected by federal or state laws?
What we already know							
Source 1 hoglezoo.org/ native.to.Utah. php							
Source 2							

with questions that I chose based on supplementary core curriculum materials. In Mrs. Christensen's room, I allowed the students to generate the questions that would be used on the chart (see Table 2).

On my first day in the classroom for both classes, I began by reading *Alejandro's Gift* (Albert, 1994) and parts of *America's Deserts: Guide to Plants and Animals* (Wallace, 1996). We discussed how some of the animals in these books can be found in Utah and we also discussed other animals native to Utah that were not mentioned in the book. I passed out a list of all the possible animals they could research and asked them to individually mark their first, second, and third choice of animal that they wanted to read and write about. With these marked lists in hand, I prepared for the next day by pairing students according to their expressed interest in specific animals. I de-

Table 2: I-Chart for Mrs. Christensen's Class

	What does it look like?	What does it eat?	Where does it live?	Who are its predators?	How does it protect itself?	How does move? Fly? Swim? Run?	Is it endangered (hard to find)?	Cool facts about our animal
What we already know								
Source 1 hoglezoo.org/ native.to.Utah. php								



cided that it didn't matter if more than one pair of students researched the same animal because I felt it was more important for them to be engaged in their work than for them to be studying unique animals.

The second day's lesson was a demonstration of how to use the I-chart. I began by modeling how they should include any information they already knew. I then modeled reading aloud the information from the Hogle Zoo website about my animal, the chuckwalla, and recording what I was learning on a large I-chart. I did this so that everyone could see it and so that they could come to the board and participate by writing notes on it. As I read aloud from my webpage about chuckwallas, I thought aloud about the process of writing information on the I-chart (see Table 3) using the questions at the top to guide me.

The students spent the rest of that day and most of the next day working with their assigned partner reading aloud and taking notes from their printouts from the Hogle Zoo website.

On the fourth day, I took them to the computer lab where they worked in pairs using Google to search for more information about their animal. I

Table 3: I-Chart with Modeled Notetaking

	What does it look like?	What does it eat?	Where does it live?	Who are its predators?	How does it protect itself?	How does it move? Fly? Swim? Run?	Is it endangered (hard to find)?	Cool facts about our animal
What we already know	lizard		desert		inhales and gets puffed out and stuck between rocks			
Source 1 hoglezoo.org/ native.to.Utah. php	skin has a sandpaper texture tail with a blunt tip flat, dark body flaps of skin on neck changes colors a foot and a half long it's fat pot-bellied	creosote bush yellow blossoms wild fruit	southern Utah deserts with rocky hillsides southwest USA		Gulps air, puffs itself up and hides in rocks. Huffs or hisses at intruders			it lays eggs

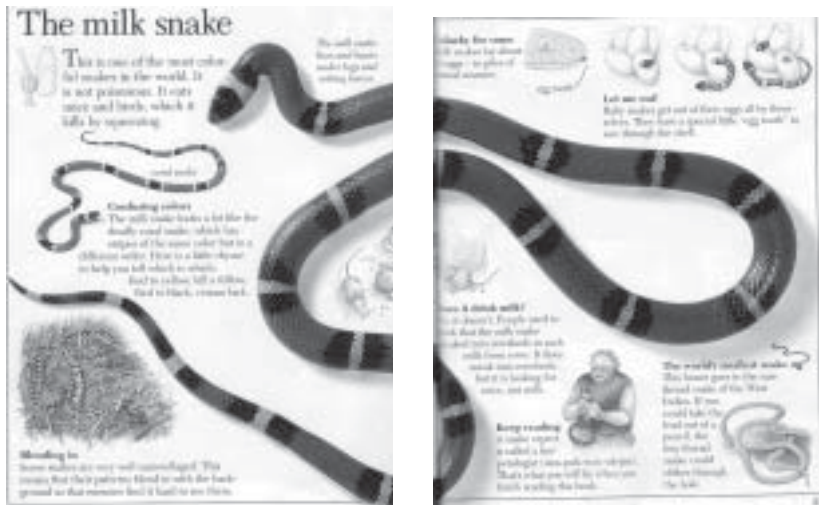
allowed them to print out the information from two of the websites they found. Since their animals had unique names like American Kestrel, no one accidentally ran into inappropriate materials. The fifth day was spent taking notes from these new resources.

The sixth day's lesson included pointing out the unique features of books like *Amazing Snakes* (Parsons, 1990) (see Figure 1), which have headings, subheadings, photos, and captions that are laid out in a nonlinear fashion. I did this because I wanted them to be thinking about how their collected information could be formatted in this nonlinear way for their end product. Linear text flows left to right and top to bottom. Nonlinear text layouts ask the reader to make choices about the order in which to read. Captions might be read first, and then connected paragraphs. In some cases, such as in the *Amazing Snakes* book, paragraphs can be read in any order the reader chooses.

After we discussed the features of these nonlinear texts, I then modeled how to transform the notes from my I-chart onto a rough draft page of 11" x 17" paper. I modeled using a title for the page, subheadings for the information under each question of the I-chart, paragraphs of information for each subheading, saving room for pictures or photos, and writing captions.

The next several days the students worked on their rough drafts, planning the layout of their page in a class book, writing the text, choosing or

Figure 1. Nonlinear text layout in *Amazing Snakes*.



Note. From *Amazing Snakes*, by Alexandra Parsons, 1990, New York: Random House Children's Books. Copyright 1990 by Dorling Kindersley. Reprinted with permission.

drawing pictures, and finally editing their own work to the best of their ability. I typed up their written texts and they did their final layout on two pieces of white 8-1/2" x 11" paper (to facilitate placement of text and pictures so that the book could be cheaply photocopied and stapled).

### Students' Collaborative Process

The students worked in pairs to read the information from the Hogle Zoo website that pertained to their animal. I asked them to read all the way through their information before they began to write information on their I-charts (see Figure 2). As they worked, I conferenced with pairs of students, helping when they asked for help, asking them how the work was going when they didn't. Though there was some off-task behavior, in the 24 pairs of students in two classrooms I found only one pair that didn't function independently. They did both end up contributing to the I-chart and the final written piece, but they needed help during most of the process.

Most of the other groups collaborated very successfully. Ashley and Brittney were typical (see Figures 2 and 3). They were productive while adding information to their I-chart. They didn't write in complete sentences on their I-chart just as I had modeled in the demonstration lessons. As they wrote their rough draft, they planned out the layout of their page while also drafting creative subheads and paragraphs of information to go with them.

Figure 2: Rachana and Jessica Gather Information From Their Website Printout and Record it on Their I-Chart



Figure 3: Ashley and Brittney's I-chart

The Black Bear A & B	What does it look like?	What does it eat?	Does it come out at night or during the day?
What I already know	furry black big and wide		
Source 1 Hedge Zoo says: this is a small animal with a small head and a small body	5-6 feet tall weigh 125-600 pounds	fruits, nuts, roots, grass, deer, caribou and some fish.	
Source 2 Angie Lane	black with brown muzzle hump patch on chest 60-70 in. - 80 lbs 200-300 average brown or cinnamon short tail small eyes and ears are small and round have long powerful claws average age - 18 years thick fur (grayish)	ants, nuts, berries, grass, roots, deer and moose and common plant, cedar leaves, berries, some 11 rodents, peanuts and fruit bloody grass, bees,	during the day

The students spent some time editing and proofreading their rough drafts to the best of their ability and then I typed up their text into small paragraphs that could be cut and pasted onto white paper along with headings, sub-headings, pictures, and captions. Ashley and Brittney's pages reveal that they understood the task very clearly. They transformed their notes from their I-chart into well-written, coherent paragraphs. A simple list of all the foods that bears eat became:

Anybody up for dessert?

Almost any sweet thing is a favorite to this bear. Also they like flowers and other grasses. They feast on deer, moose, and small rodents. They also eat insects.

The rest of their completed 2-page spread is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4: Ashley and Brittany's rough draft

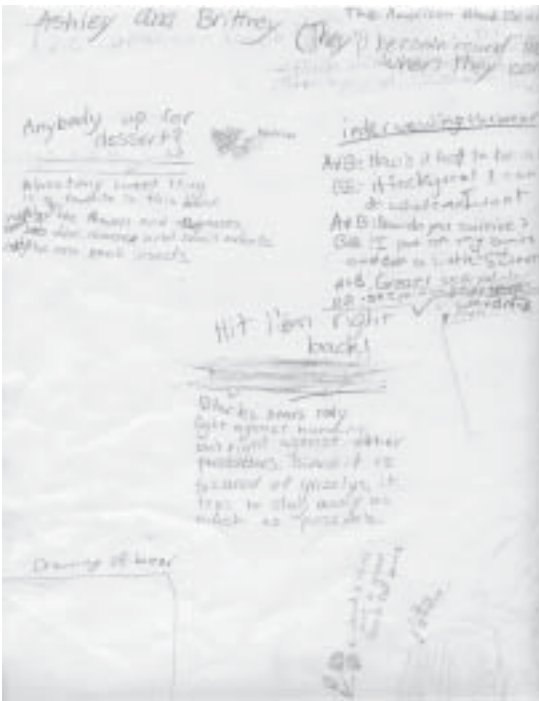


Figure 5: Ashley and Brittany's final copy



The writing that these fourth graders were able to do using an I-chart to scaffold the note taking process was impressive. Table 4 shows how a portion of the pairs of students recorded their notes on their I-chart and then how they transformed those notes into prose for their final product. A few pairs of students simply copied onto their rough draft what they had written on their I-chart, but the majority of them were able to take lists and phrases and turn them into acceptable and sometimes truly engaging prose.

The students' I-chart notes became written prose through a process of discussion with their writing partner that was based on the modeling of this process that I did during the instructional phase of this intervention. When I modeled taking the notes on my I-chart, I engaged the students through shared writing. This allowed them to see and be part of a discussion that turned I-charts notes into fluent sentences. Our examination of books like *Amazing Snakes* (Parsons, 1990) showed them that their headings and subheadings could be creatively worded, rather than a simple repetition of the questions on the I-chart and so some of them were inspired to write humorous headings and subheadings.

## Students' Final Products

The final product that we produced was a class book. Students submitted drawings for the cover and we brainstormed possible titles and voted until we had fairly enthusiastic agreement. Mrs. Ure's class decided to call their book *Wild Animals* and Mrs. Christensen's class decided to call their book *Amazing Animals of Utah*. Each pair of students had a two-page spread in the book. After they did the layout of their two pages, I typed a title page, table of contents and dedication page to go with the book and created a cover using drawings that some of the students submitted. I made copies of the book for every student to keep and a classroom copy for the teacher. We ended the unit by celebrating with a reading of the book done by the writing partners for each section.

## Implications for the Classroom

The work of Viscovich (2002) has shown that the I-chart is superior to outlining and semantic webbing for improving both students' writing and critical thinking. The work described here with a more diverse group of students than Viscovich worked with shows that the I-chart can be useful and effective with a broader group of students. Their writing shows that they learned how to write prose from notes and their engagement in the writing process was high. Their teachers were impressed by the students' enthusiasm throughout the writing process.

Given the success of the I-chart as a strategy for improving students'

Table 4: Transformation of notes into prose.

Students and topic	Question heading and I-chart note	Completed paragraph with subheading
Tyler and Luis Utah Milksnake	How does it find shelter? Sleeps in caves, logs, rotten leaves	Sleepy Hollow The milksnake sleeps in caves, logs, and even under rotten leaves.
Tyson and Jonathan California King Snake	What does it look like? Long stripes sharp teeth shiny smooth The jaws are hinged immune to rattle snakes	What does it look like? The California King Snake is long and shiny. It also has yellow stripes.
Brad and Jon Great Basin Rattlesnake	How does it protect itself from danger (does it run or fight)? Fight rattle then bite it will get it away from human	How does it protect itself? The rattlesnake shakes its rattle. Then it will try to get away. If the human comes closer it will bite.
Jennifer and Alexis Utah Prairie Dog	What does it look like? Coat is buffed yellow or light brown. His ears are short and rounded. Its feet have claws for burrowing. Round, plump, gold-color, and unarguably cute.	What does it look like? The prairie dog's coat is buffed yellow or light brown. Its ears are short and rounded. It also has claws on its feet for burrowing, plus it is unarguably CUTE!
Camille and Kierstin Cougar	What does it eat? Other animals small rodents up to fully grown deer Does it come out at night or during the day? Dusk or dawn	Dinnertime! When it comes to dinnertime for cougars they go on the run for small rodents up to fully grown deer. Cougars mostly hunt at dusk or dawn.
Cynthia and Grisel American Bald Eagle	How does it find shelter? In trees goes to trees	Shelter Eagles go to trees for shelter and make nests on the trees.
Colin and Macauley Golden Eagle	Who are its predators? People Intruders	Scary People The enemies of the Golden Eagles are people and intruders.
Gabriel and Zane Prairie Dog	Who are its predators? Dogs cougar foxes hawks coyotes bobcats eagles snakes	Who are its predators? Do you know who are their predators? Well I do. Snakes and eagles, and bobcats and badgers and coyotes. Do you think that's all? There's more: ferrets, hawk and weasels and foxes. It is endangered.
Brenda and Osvelia Chuckwalla	Who are its predators? The main predators are man, snakes, raptors and carnivorous animals.	Bring it on! My predators are the man, snakes, raptors and carnivores. So when I'm in a fight I usually win! Ah! Oh no, here comes the King Snake!



comprehension of expository materials, critical thinking, and informational writing, I believe that this strategy should be more widely taught in undergraduate reading and language arts methods courses and should become a standard practice in elementary and middle school classrooms. Semantic mapping is a good pre-writing strategy for generating ideas, but the I-chart, as it was used in this intervention, was especially useful for helping scaffolding the process of note taking from information texts and transforming those notes into connected prose.

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**BUILDING BRIDGES TO  
IMPROVED LITERACY INSTRUCTION**

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# READING FOR CHARACTER: PRINCIPLES OF BIBLIOTHERAPY APPLIED TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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## Abstract

*In the past decade, interest has revived in character education, a facet of American education from the earliest days of the nation's history. Bibliotherapy, the process of reading books with a therapeutic intent, is an effective means to implement character education within the curriculum. Bibliotherapy is a child-friendly and noninvasive technique that can be used in various groupings, settings, and ability levels. Book selection, active dialogue, and follow-up activities are critical elements in the successful classroom implementation of a bibliotherapy lesson.*

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Character education has been a facet of American education from the earliest days of the nation's history. Commitment to a moral foundation was considered essential to the success of democracy by leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, who argued for early instruction in the democratic virtues of respect for the rights of individuals, regard for the law, voluntary participation in public life, and concern for the common good (Lickona, 1991). In the early days of American history, the Puritans used the hornbook to establish virtue-based literature as a cornerstone of American education, a tradition carried on in the next century through the McGuffey Readers (Leming, 2000). The continued popularity of virtue-based literature is demonstrated by the sale of over two million copies of the *Book of Virtues* by William Bennett (1993). The revived attention to character education in the schools is evident in the educational literature of the past decade (Bennett, 1998; Elliot, 2000; Kilpatrick, 1992; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000; Schmidt & Palliotet, 2001).

As schools mandate character education, teachers face the dilemma crowding another requirement into their teaching schedules while continuing to meet increased accountability for academic performance. Therefore,

teachers are seeking the most effective approach to teaching character education and one that conserves time in their classrooms.

## Principles of Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy, which is the process of reading books with a therapeutic intent, has been applied extensively for students with significant learning and behavior problems who often experience peer rejection, poor social skills, and low self-esteem: elements that are addressed in character education curricula. The perceived success of the approach has made it popular in the classroom. All students can benefit from bibliotherapy because they are likely to encounter similar situations during their school years.

For the intervention to have the optimum effect on character education, the reader should experience the following elements in the bibliotherapy lesson (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000):

- **Identification.** The reader should be able to identify with the main character and the events in the story. The main character should be perceived at a similar age as the students, display similar behaviors, and face events with which the students can identify.
- **Involvement.** Following identification with the main character, readers relate to the situation and feel emotional ties with the main character. When readers become emotionally involved, literature can have the effect of changing their perceptions of behavior.
- **Insight.** The realization occurs when readers become aware that the problem they are experiencing, like that of the characters in the story, need not remain static. Insight allows readers the opportunity to analyze the main character and situation and subsequently develop opinions regarding behaviors or actions adopted by the main character in his or her attempts to deal with the problem. Readers also develop problem-solving skills by exploring effective alternative behaviors to replace old inappropriate behaviors.

“Bibliotherapy is a child-friendly, noninvasive method that employs reading—a context familiar to students. Incorporating bibliotherapy into the academic curriculum is a natural process that will also augment reading skills” (Sullivan & Strang, 2002/03, p. 23). Throughout the application of bibliotherapy, it is vital to maintain an active dialogue with the students. A variety of follow-up activities should also be used because a single bibliotherapy lesson is not sufficient to produce the genuine change which is the goal for character education. Activities that can be used to bridge the gap between the lesson and application to their lives include discussion, role-playing, creative writing, and artistic expression (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000; Sullivan & Strang, 2002/03).

## Application to Children's Literature

Children's literature provides an effective vehicle for interweaving character education into existing curricula to address problems in everyday life (Forgan, 2002; Schmidt & Palliotet, 2001; ). Book selection is a critical element for successful bibliotherapy in order to facilitate the principles of identification, involvement, and insight. According to Jim Trelease (2001), a book not worth reading at age 50 is not worth reading at age 10. Children have no more appetite for boredom than we do, and perhaps they have less. O'Sullivan (2004) describes four types of books that meet the criterion for "deeper and richer literature" and states that "the stronger the characters, the easier it will be to include character education naturally" (p. 641):

- Well-written books containing moral dilemmas;
- Books with enough depth to allow comprehension beyond literal level;
- Books with admirable but believable characters about the same age as the students;
- Books across a wide range of cultures with both boys and girls as lead characters.

Representative lists of books for character education have been compiled by the following authors:

- DeLong and Schwedt (1997) organized a book list by genre and included content applications and values at the end of each annotated entry;
- Kilpatrick, Wolfe, and Wolfe (1994) prepared a categorical list of books selected for moral imagination that were "test driven" on their own children;
- Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) listed books by grade level that address everyday problems faced by children, such as self acceptance, teasing, and sibling rivalry;
- Sullivan and Strang (2002/03) provided age appropriate bibliographic information for social relationships;
- The Treasury of Read-Alouds published in Trelease's well-known *Read Aloud Handbook* (2001) provides the recommended grade level, the number of pages, and a brief annotation for each book.

## Sample Lessons

Including children's literature and character principles in language arts lessons provides an effective initiation of bibliotherapy in the classroom without infringing on academic class time (Maich & Kean, 2004). "Infusing

literature study with character education is more a matter of a slight change of emphasis rather than a new topic" (O'Sullivan, 2004). The following sample lessons (Figure 1) demonstrate the principles of bibliotherapy applied to children's literature for the purpose of character education.

Figure 1. Sample Sixth Grade Lesson

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Sample 1. Sixth Grade Language Arts Lesson

Children's Literature Selection: *Holes*, by Louis Sachar

Character Principle: Caring—Help people in need

Application of Bibliotherapy Principles

- *Identification*. A story map is used to introduce the characters and setting and track the plot. Sixth-graders identify with boys their own age who have been sentenced to dig holes at a detention camp. The struggles are similar to the everyday problems faced in the middle grade classroom.
- *Involvement*. Discussion circles are based on reading journal entries. The elements of adventure and humor draw the students into the story and provide a wealth of topics for discussion during the reading.
- *Insight*. Cause-Effect Charts emphasize the consequences for the behavior of the characters. Understanding of the character principle for each day is developed during the review of the chapter content at the end of the daily discussion circles. Students compare the choices faced by the characters to situations in their own lives.

Follow-Up Activity: Students prepare chapters 18 and 21 for readers' theatre and practice reading aloud with partners.

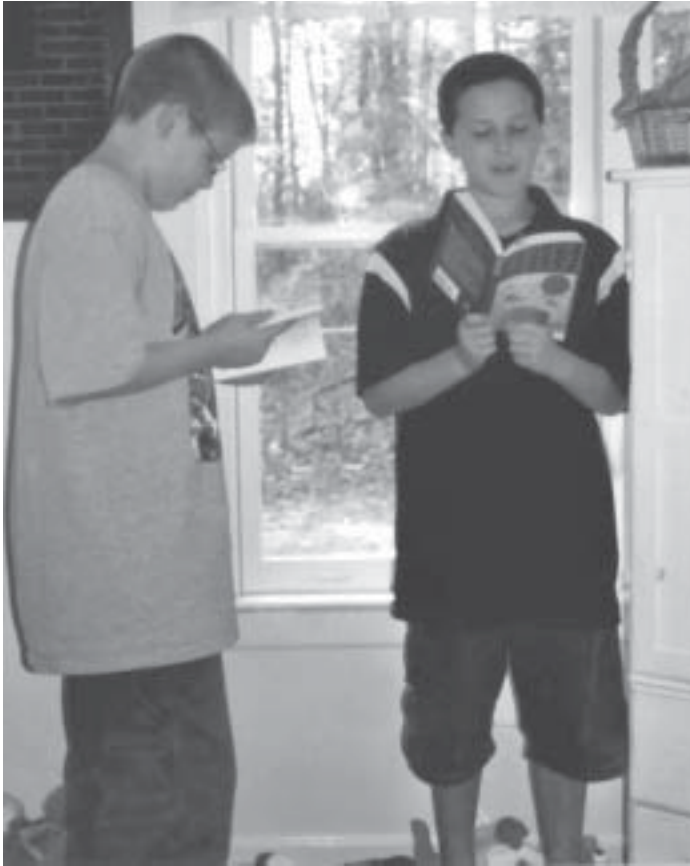
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The Newbery Award book, *Holes* (Sachar, 1998), was selected for literature study in the first sample lesson. The students have read assigned chapters of the book for homework, and the teacher has used a story map to introduce the characters and setting and to track the plot developments as the assigned chapters are discussed in class. The story map is an effective tool for promoting comprehension of narrative text and also enhances student *identification* with the story characters. As students read the chapters they fill in a Cause-Effect Chart in their reading journals and bring them to class for discussion circles. In addition to strengthening students' critical thinking skills, the Cause-Effect Chart utilizes student *involvement* to emphasize that there are consequences for the choices that students make, an *insight* which is the foundation of character education. The insights can be shared as each discussion circle reports the conclusions reached by their group.

Readers' theatre (Figure 2) is a follow-up activity to increase long-term effects on reading comprehension and genuine development of character. The students adapt chapters 18 and 21 into a script with two characters and

Figure 2. Readers' Theatre Enhances Fluency and Reinforces Character Lessons for Middle School Students

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a narrator. Readers' theatre does not require costumes, props, or memorization of the script, although minimal props can be used. As students rehearse the dramatic reading with partners, their oral reading fluency is increased. Chapters 18 and 21 were selected to emphasize the character principle of Caring—Help others in need. In Chapter 18, Stanley, the main character in the book, discovers that Zero cannot read or write. In Chapter 21, the boys reach an agreement that Zero will help Stanley dig his holes each day if Stanley will teach Zero to read and write. At the conclusion of the entire literature study, the teacher will show the movie version of *Holes* (Sachar, 1998) that was produced and released by Disney.

### Figure 3. Sample Kindergarten Lesson

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#### Sample 2. Kindergarten Language Arts Lesson

Children's Literature Selection: *The Tortoise and the Hare* (Aesop's Fables)

Character Principle: Perseverance—Keep on trying

Application of Bibliotherapy Principles

- *Identification.* Animal characters are universal because their gender and ethnicity can vary so that all children can identify with the characters.
- *Involvement.* The teacher will read the book aloud as a shared reading experience, pausing frequently to discuss the reading.
- *Insight.* Students understand perseverance at the end of the story when they hear the winner of the race.

Follow-Up Activity: Role-playing activity with puppets

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*The Tortoise and the Hare*, one of Aesop's Fables, was the children's literature studied for the sample kindergarten lesson (Figure 3). The book was selected for the character principle and also for the animal characters to facilitate *identification* through their universal characteristics.

The teacher will read the story aloud so that everyone can experience *involvement* in the literature study, including younger students who are unable to read the books independently. The read-aloud technique can also be used for older students with poor reading ability. During the shared reading ex-

Figure 4. Young Children Enjoy Role-Playing with Puppets to Emphasize the Character Principle and Strengthen Comprehension of the Story

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perience, the teacher reads the page aloud, shows the picture to the class, and guides discussion to promote listening comprehension. When the winner of the race is announced, students experience *insight* as they realize that the turtle won the race through perseverance, one of the character traits.

In order to enhance the long-term effects of the lesson, role-playing can be implemented as a follow-up activity. Role-playing is especially effective using puppets (Figure 4), because students may feel more comfortable speaking and acting through a puppet. They also demonstrate their understanding of the character principle through the dialogue and oral rehearsal aids in their retention of the character lesson and increases their application of the character principle in real-life situations.

## Conclusion

Teaching character principles that apply to children's literature is a character education strategy that conserves classroom time because it does not infringe upon the academic schedule. As demonstrated in the sample lessons, the principles of bibliotherapy are an effective match for guided reading activities to enhance reading comprehension and character education.

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# ALTERNATIVES TO SOUNDING OUT: THE INFLUENCE OF EXPLICIT CUEING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON WORD IDENTIFICATION IN SECOND GRADE STUDENTS

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## **Abstract**

*This study sought to determine the effects of explicit cueing strategies instruction on strategy awareness of second grade students. Cueing strategies were those strategies assisting students in accessing the semantic, syntactic and graphophonic language information systems when problem-solving words. During a 12-week training period, 20 second grade students received two, 20-minute whole-group lessons per week in which cueing strategies were explicitly explained and modeled, combined with scaffolding of cueing strategies during guided reading and individual reading situations. Norm-referenced tests revealed significant differences in word reading and word meaning in reading achievement in those who received the training compared with those who did not. Qualitative data sources for cueing strategy participants revealed that prior to training, students were aware of one primary strategy when faced with difficult words, "sounding out." At the conclusion of the training, students were aware of alternate strategies to be used for problem-solving words.*

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Improved reading achievement in the very early grades is now, more than ever, a national imperative. President George W. Bush (2001) has declared, "too many of our neediest children are being left behind." The Reading First Initiative, one component of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states that every effort should be made to ensure that all children become readers by the end of third grade. Substantial federal dollars have been and will continue to be expended on the fulfillment of this decree. School districts

nationwide are looking to the latest research in reading education to determine how to best increase reading achievement in young children, as they will be held accountable for that achievement or lack thereof.

In order to determine best practices for teaching children to read successfully, the reading process should be closely examined. It is a complex, multifaceted process in which readers bring what they already know to the printed page in order to construct meaning with text (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Therefore, teaching young children to identify words should be an integrated, strategic process, allowing children to not only "crack the code" of the written language, but also to actively construct meaning along the way.

Initially, in the psycholinguistic model, Goodman (1970) concluded that reading is a language process that involves the integration of three language systems; the graphophonic system (letter and sound relationships), the syntactic system (structure of the language), and the semantic system (meaning of the text). Thus, readers actively select the fewest possible cues to create an expectation for textual meaning. The graphophonic cueing system includes spelling, sound, and phonic relationships. To encourage children's use of this graphophonic cueing system, teachers ask questions such as: Did that look right? The syntactic cueing system involves the grammar or structure of the language. Word order, tense, number and gender are all included in the syntax, or grammar, of the language. To encourage children to use the syntactic cueing system, teachers ask questions such as: Can we say it like that? The semantic system deals with the meaning of the text. To encourage children to use the semantic cueing system, teachers ask questions such as: Did that make sense? The semantic system takes into account the reader's prior knowledge and how it influences his/her understanding of the events occurring within the text. For the purpose of this paper we will focus on the three cueing systems initially identified by Goodman and his colleagues (Goodman & Goodman, 1994).

Good readers are more experienced readers than less proficient readers (Hoffman, Gardner, & Clements, 1981), but the reading process remains consistent. Research in constructivism documents that this process, intent on constructing meaning, is used by all (Goodman & Marak, 1996). All readers miscue or make unexpected responses. They may substitute, omit, or insert words. Young readers and struggling readers, however, are not as efficient at revising miscues and may over-rely on one cueing system and neglect others. Perhaps this inability to access the cueing systems appropriately stems from the manner in which teachers respond to children during the reading process. Are teachers departmentalizing the skills and strategies that children would naturally integrate during text reading or is it possible that teachers overemphasize one cueing system and exclude others in an attempt to assist children in recognizing difficult words?

Several important studies of teacher verbal feedback shed light on this subject. Allington (1978, 1980) studied interruption behaviors of elementary teachers to determine if teachers responded differently to the miscues of "good" and "poor" readers. Teacher interruption behaviors were categorized and the results revealed that the most common type of interruption behavior was providing the word. Results also revealed that teachers tended to prompt poor readers to use graphophonic cues slightly more than they did the good readers. It was concluded that this differential treatment of poor readers might be contributing to their reading difficulties.

Hoffman and Clements (1984) devised a study to characterize teacher verbal feedback using FORMAS, a miscue analysis system taxonomy (Hoffman, Gardner, & Clements, 1981). Researchers videotaped reading group sessions of eight second grade teachers. Results of this study indicated that the poorer readers were most often given the word immediately or shortly after the students paused. The study also concluded that poorer readers had less engaged time, less teacher contact, and fewer successful experiences during reading than did the good readers.

It is important to note that none of the studies included in the literature review have examined the effects of cueing strategy instruction at the word identification level. Marie Clay (1991), founder of Reading Recovery, has indicated that it is not possible to directly teach children to use language cueing systems strategically and appropriately, that these strategies can only be modeled and scaffolded. There is little research available that might support or refute this statement. In fact, very little research in the area of strategies for figuring out words has been conducted, other than studies of word identification by decoding or word analogy. Since figuring out words requires the strategic integration of the three language cueing systems, perhaps a strategic approach to learning how to integrate the cueing systems is needed as well as alphabetic knowledge. Strategy instruction includes modeling and scaffolding (related to Clay's work) within an explicit teaching format. Strategy Instruction and Mental Modeling have a long history in literacy teaching.

Duffy, Herrman, and Roehler (1988) proposed a teaching method called mental modeling, which involves showing students explicitly what a strategy is and exactly how to apply it by thinking aloud. Duffy et al. (1986) conducted a study to determine whether teachers who were more explicit in their strategy instruction would be more effective than teachers who were less explicit. Twenty-two teachers of fifth grade students were assigned to treatment and comparison groups. Treatment group teachers were taught how to convert basal skills into useful strategies, how to make explicit statements about reading strategies to be taught, and how to organize the strategies for presentation. Results indicated a strong positive correlation between teacher explicitness and student awareness of lesson content.

A follow-up study by Duffy et al. (1987) sought to determine the effects of explicit explanation of the mental processes associated with strategic reading. Participants in the study were 20 third grade teachers and their low reading groups. The treatment group of teachers received training on the reasoning associated with strategic skill use, not on the performance of isolated skills. After one year, results revealed explicit explanations increased low-group students' awareness of the need to be strategic with the lesson content and increased their use of strategic reasoning. Students in the explicit explanation group also outperformed comparison group students on standardized measures of reading, including a measure of reading achievement given one year after the direct explanation intervention had been administered.

Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, and Schuder (1996) conducted another study to validate transactional strategies instruction (explicit teaching with scaffolding) that closely relates with this study. Participants included six groups of low-achieving second graders who received transactional strategies instruction in areas of overall text comprehension and fix-up strategies. Fix up strategies included skipping words, substituting or guessing, using picture or word clues, rereading, and breaking words into parts. When compared with six groups of low achieving students who were taught more conventional reading instruction, students receiving transactional strategies instruction evidenced greater strategy awareness and strategy use, greater content knowledge, and superior performance on standardized reading tests.

Explicit teaching not only involves direct explanation, as the name implies, but also the act of supportive scaffolding. Supported scaffolding is closely related to Vygotsky's (1978) view that reading is a socially based action. Anderson and Roit (1993) designed a research project in which nine experimental teachers participated in self-evaluative workshops as they learned to foster strategic reading in their students. Upon close inspection of the techniques that were used, peer support, problem-solving discussions, and fostering active reading among students—all elements of scaffolded instruction, were the main avenues for strategy instruction. Students of these teachers reported increased use of strategic reading and improved scores on a standardized test of reading achievement.

Research on exemplary teachers reveals that good teachers scaffold and coach their students toward learning. Taylor and Pearson (2002) report that in an evaluation of 11 schools from eight different school districts, teachers determined to be "accomplished" preferred the teaching style of coaching, as opposed to telling and tended to engage students in higher-level thinking related to reading than did other teachers. A study of outstanding first grade teachers in New York (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998) sought to characterize effective teaching. Researchers observed 10 teachers, 5 who had been deemed outstanding by their supervisors and 5 who were

considered more typical. Unique characteristics of the outstanding teachers regarding literacy instruction were an exceptional balance of whole language techniques and the explicit teaching of skills, active scaffolding of student learning, and encouragement of self-regulation and self-monitoring.

Pressley et al. (2001) studied literacy instruction in five first grade classrooms and found that effective teachers were characterized by scaffolding and matching of demands to student proficiency and encouragement of student self-regulation. This finding is in accordance with the recent wave of research on exemplary teachers that found exemplary teachers: 1) encourage student use of strategies and self-regulation in reading, 2) monitor student progress and encourage student improvement, and 3) provide scaffolded instruction to help students improve their use of reading strategies (Taylor & Pearson, 2002).

The present study looked at increased improvement in word learning and changes in awareness of word learning. The study was conducted to answer the following questions: (1) Can students who had been explicitly instructed in cueing strategies and received modeling and scaffolded instruction in a regular second grade classroom outperform students who received more traditional reading instruction on word identification knowledge, sentence understanding, and comprehension based on standardized measures of reading performance? (2) Would explicit teaching of cueing strategies influence student's awareness of reading strategies?

## **Methodology**

### *Participants and Setting*

The study included 39 participants from two second grade classrooms in a rural Midwestern town. Participants in the intervention (cueing strategy instruction) group for this study included 20 students from a self-contained second grade classroom. This class included 4 students with Limited English Proficiency, 13 Caucasian students, and 2 Native American students. Participants in the comparison group included 19 students from a second grade classroom in the same elementary school. This class included 2 students with Limited English Proficiency, 15 Caucasian students, and 1 Native American student. The second grade classrooms provided the instructional setting for this study. The students were assigned by the principal to the second grade classrooms. The four second grade teachers were interviewed and two were selected on the basis of their instructional fidelity. The comparison group classroom was taught by Becky Robertson (pseudonym), a dedicated third year teacher who followed a traditional basal reading lesson. The first author had worked with Mrs. Robertson for several years and was quite familiar with her teaching style.

The instructional program on cueing strategies was provided by a first year teacher, Rhonda Peters (pseudonym). She was eager to try out new teaching methods that she had learned in the teacher education program in which she studied the work of Marie Clay. During Mrs. Peters' student teaching semester, she had frequently visited with the first author, indicating her desire to implement guided reading instruction when she had a class of her own. The first author, a doctoral student and former Reading Recovery teacher, served as the trainer for Mrs. Peters and as observer within both classrooms. As the reading specialist at the school for three years, she was well acquainted with the teaching approaches of most teachers in the elementary program. Mrs. Peters' desire to incorporate Marie Clay's practices and Mrs. Robertson's inclination for a more teacher directed, basal-driven approach would provide assurance that each approach would be faithfully carried out.

### *Strategic Instruction of Cueing Systems*

The instructional program was based on Marie Clay's (1991) theories of how children develop self-improving systems for correcting miscues and the introduction of the "Helping Hand" chart (Kinnucan-Welsh, Magill, & Dean, 1999), which included strategies similar to Marie Clay's cueing systems.

Procedures for "explicit strategy instruction" were adapted from the Pearson and Dole (1987) model. Explicit instruction involves four phases: 1) teacher explanation and modeling of the strategy, 2) guided student practice of the strategy with scaffolding by the teacher, 3) independent practice of the strategy in which the teacher phases in to scaffold learning if needed, and 4) use of the strategy in various reading situations. The instructional program included three major sections of class time; large-group teacher read-alouds, guided reading groups, and student individual reading time. Through large group teacher explanation and modeling, the teacher introduced a visual aid, referred to as the "Helping Hand" (Kinnucan-Welsh, Magill, & Dean, 1999), which included the following strategies: check the picture, think about the story, look for chunks, get your mouth ready, and think about what sounds right. One new strategy was introduced each week for the first five weeks. For guided practice, the teacher prompted and provided feedback related to using the new strategy through guided reading groups that occurred three times weekly. As the students began to apply the strategies during daily independent reading, the teacher would refer to the "Helping Hand" to scaffold learning if needed. In the remaining weeks, the teacher encouraged students to use strategies appropriate for the reading situation and to discuss strategy use with a friend.

Activities in the comparison group included whole class reading of the weekly basal story, small group reading consisting of vocabulary practice and round robin reading, and daily phonics lessons. The comparison group also participated in daily independent reading and teacher selected read alouds

for student enjoyment. This teacher; however, did not discuss, teach or intentionally prompt specific reading strategies found on the "Helping Hand" at any time.

### *Procedures*

This study was conducted over a 12-week period and had two sets of procedures: one for quantitative analysis and one for qualitative analysis.

**Quantitative Procedures.** The quantitative design used in this study was a quasi-experimental design which employed pre-post test, non-equivalent control group design. It was not possible to randomly assign participants to either the intervention or basal reading group; rather, intact classrooms to which the principal assigned students were used. Thus, an analysis of covariance using the pretest as a covariate for final scores on the *Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation* (Williams, 2000), a standardized test of reading achievement, accounted for the unequal groups. Further, an analysis of covariance was performed to assess differences in post-test scores in each subtest area and total test scores in order to determine if cueing strategy instruction made a difference in student outcomes. Means and standard deviations were used as a basis for the data analysis.

**Qualitative Procedures.** Qualitative data was collected from only those students that participated in the cueing strategy instruction. This data consisted of three sources: two different interviews at the beginning and end of cueing strategy instruction and teacher observation during the independent reading events. The first reading interviews were adapted from the Reading Interview for Young Readers (Goodman et al., 1987) which included questions such as: *When you are reading and come to something you don't know, what do you do?* and *What if your mom (someone the child named as a good reader) came to something she didn't know? What do you think she would do?*

The second reading interviews were conducted after the students read a passage at their instructional reading level using *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) (Beaver, 1997). Students were interviewed about strategy use after they read aloud as the teacher marked their miscues (words missed). Then, the interviewer took each child back to a point of error and said "There is a problem here. What could you do to try to fix it?" This interview procedure, developed by the first author, was based on reading recovery prompting (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Additionally, data using videotapes of whole group lessons and guided reading lessons, and teacher observations during independent reading events were collected from the intervention group.

### *Analysis*

Both quantitative and qualitative evaluations were used to analyze the data.

**Quantitative Analysis.** Quantitative data included data from the *Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation* (Williams, 2000), which included subtests



of word reading, word meaning, sentence comprehension, and passage comprehension. This test was chosen to determine which aspects of the reading process were most impacted by the intervention. With explicit instruction in cueing strategies, it was hypothesized that not only word identification and word meaning would be affected, but also sentence and passage comprehension. Students in both the intervention and comparison groups were administered the test at the beginning of the study and again at its completion.

**Qualitative Analysis.** Qualitative data collected in this study consisted of several sources. The student responses to the Reading Interview and the DRA Interview were carefully read and reread, then analyzed for patterns of strategy awareness. Using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) student awareness of strategies demonstrated in the interviews and DRA interviews were carefully compared with the strategy awareness demonstrated in videotaped lessons and teacher observations. Data from student interviews and DRA interview transcripts were categorized by two coders (the interviewer and another certified Reading Recovery teacher who served as research assistant). Coders formed a category each time the student made reference to a different reading strategy. Reading strategies were defined as any plan of action mentioned by the reader to make sense of printed material (Pressley, 2000). Any discrepancies in initially formed categories were discussed until consensus was reached. In order to integrate categories and their properties, a list of all strategies mentioned, either before or after the study, was compiled. Categories that were extremely similar, such as “look at it” and “look at the word” were collapsed. As with the initial categorization, any collapse in categories was discussed by both coders until consensus was reached. Student responses during teacher observations and videotaped lessons were reviewed to determine if further refinement or additions of categories was needed. These comparisons led to the formulation of certain themes regarding student awareness of cueing strategies both prior to and at the completion of the study.

## Findings

In both quantitative and qualitative findings, there were positive indications that cueing strategy instruction showed promise as an instructional strategy for word learning.

### *Analysis of Group Differences in Reading Achievement*

To determine the difference in reading achievement as a result of cueing strategy instruction or traditional reading instruction, F-tests were performed on post-test group means on each individual subtest and for the total test score, using pre-test scores as the covariate. Table 1 shows group means, standard deviations, and F-tests for each subtest and for the total test scores. The ANCOVA result revealed statistically significant differences for word read-

ing ( $p = .024$ ) and word meaning ( $p = .008$ ) but not for sentence and passage comprehension measures. Thus, in word reading, students in the intervention group made significant progress when compared with the comparison group ( $F[2,38] = 5.59$ ,  $p = .024$ ). Statistically significant gains in word meaning were also found for the intervention group ( $F[2,38] = 7.98$ ,  $p = .008$ ). However, students in the intervention and comparison groups did not show significant differences in sentence comprehension ( $F[2,38] = .030$ ,  $p = .864$ ) or passage comprehension ( $F[2,38] = 1.12$ ,  $p = .297$ ). There were no significant differences in total test scores ( $F[2,38] = 3.54$ ,  $p = .068$ ) when all subtests were combined.

The average amount of change that students in each group experienced

**Table 1. Analysis of Covariance Results for Differences in Reading Achievement**

	INTERVENTION				COMPARISON			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	F[2,38]	p>F.
Post-test word reading	20	26.25	2.12	19	25.11	3.70	5.593	.024
Post-test word meaning	20	26.20	1.32	19	25.21	2.78	7.983	.008
Post-test sentence comprehension	20	14.65	4.30	19	15.42	4.57	.030	.864
Post-test passage comprehension	20	18.85	3.94	19	18.74	6.31	1.120	.297
Post-test total test	20	86.00	9.89	19	84.47	15.38	3.548	.068

throughout the 12-week study indicated that students in the intervention group began the study with an average total score of 69.30 and ended the study with an average total score of 86.00. Those students in the comparison group began the study with an average score of 74.84 (slightly higher than the intervention group) and ended the study with an average total score of 84.47 (slightly lower than the intervention group). When the mean total test scores (pre- and post-) were entered into a profile plot (See Figure 1), results revealed that the intervention group started at a lower point then surpassed the comparison group by the time the post-test was given.

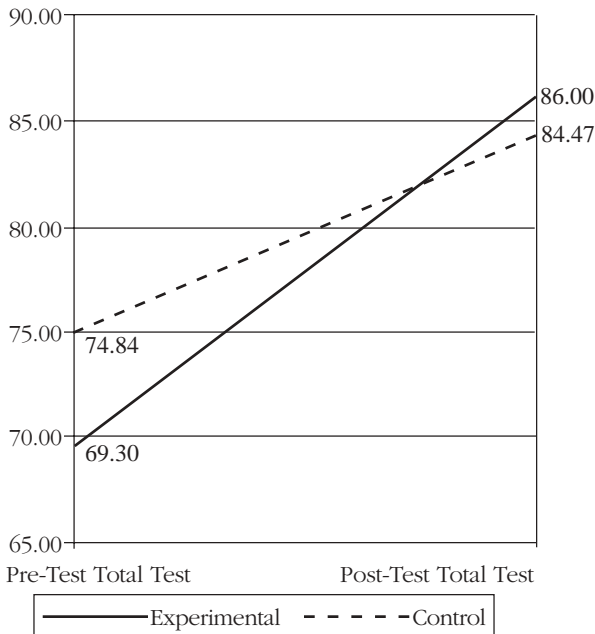
Thus, the quantitative results indeed show potential for improving word learning strategies.

### *Analysis of Strategy Awareness*

The qualitative data resulted in two themes demonstrating a shift in student strategy awareness as an influence of cueing strategy instruction.

*Theme 1: Before explicit cueing strategies instruction, students most often demonstrated awareness of one primary strategy, that of "sounding out" words.*

The response offered most by students prior to strategy instruction was

**Figure 1. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Total Test Scores.**

“sound it out.” Fourteen out of 20 students made reference to sounding out difficult words. Out of all the responses given, “sound it out” occurred 53 times during interviews and 32 times during DRA interviews. Sounding it out was mentioned a total of 85 times prior to strategy instruction. For example, Kevin (pseudonym), a lively second grade boy who enjoyed reading although at times it was difficult for him, was quite adamant about the strategy that he believed to be the most helpful when approaching a difficult word. He responded as follows:

Researcher: When you are reading and come to something you don’t know, what do you do?

Student: Sound it out.

Researcher: Do you ever do anything else?

Student: Nope.

Before the strategy training, Kevin was aware of one way to figure out unknown words—sounding it out. He made no attempt to even create another possibility.

The next most offered response was “ask for help” which occurred 17 times during initial interviews (mentioned by 13 students) and three times during initial DRA interviews for a total of 20 references to “asking for help.”

Six references were made to “looking for chunks” during the initial interviews, while five references were made to “chunks” during initial DRA interviews, for a total of 11 total references.

The next most often mentioned strategy was to “tell the word,” mentioned ten times in all prior to cueing strategies instruction. Finally, although not mentioned on the student interviews, students responded with “I don’t know” eight times during initial DRA interviews. Other strategies mentioned prior to the study were “figuring it out, giving a hint, trying it again, guessing, using the picture, looking at the word, skipping the word, thinking about the word, and using the word wall.” These strategies were mentioned eight or fewer times by students during initial interviews and DRA interviews.

*Theme 2: After cueing strategy instruction, students shifted in their awareness of strategies and consistently referred to alternate strategies when faced with difficult words.*

On the final reading interviews, an average of six strategies per student was reported. The most often mentioned strategy by students after cueing strategy instruction was “looking for chunks.” Looking for chunks was mentioned 45 times on final interviews and 19 times during DRA interviews, for a total of 64 references. For example, Kevin (the student who only used “sound it out” prior to the training) referred to three strategies that he could use to figure out a difficult word after the cueing instruction, suggesting his awareness of the ability to use alternate strategies to figure out difficult words has expanded. When the same question was asked during the final interview, he responded as follows:

Researcher: When you are reading and come to something you don’t know, what do you do?

Student: I look for chunks and cover up half the word and look for another word.

Researcher: Do you ever do anything else?

Student: I check the picture and I think about the story.

Many students reported “thinking about the story” or the “meaning” of the story for a total of 57 times, with 41 references during final interviews and 16 references during DRA interviews. For example, during DRA text reading prior to strategy instruction, Kevin was asked how he figured out a word that he had just self-corrected. He responded, “It just popped into my head!” At the conclusion of the strategy instruction, the interviewer took Kevin to a place in the text in which he read “newspaper roasted” instead of “newspaper routes.” He realized what he had said, then began to laugh.

Interviewer: Why are you laughing?

Student: Because you can’t roast a newspaper! (reference to meaning)

He was then asked what he might try to fix the problem. He immediately

responded, “I can look for chunks,” which he proceeded to do. Kevin was able to laugh at his mistake that did not make sense and come up with a plan to help fix it. Kevin finished the study reading at Level 44, which is the highest level included in the DRA assessment, an increase of eight book levels over the 12 week period.

At the end of the study, students still made reference to “sounding out” 29 times during the final interviews and 10 times during final DRA interviews for a total of 39 references.

The next most reported strategy on final interviews was “using a strategy” or the “helping hand,” referenced 32 times. For example, Stephanie (pseudonym), a quiet, tentative student who was experiencing great difficulty with reading began reading with an instructional reading level of 12 based on DRA criteria. In the final interview, Stephanie was able to discuss a variety of strategies, all of which were cueing strategies emphasized during the strategy training.

Researcher: When you are reading and come to something you don’t know, what do you do?

Student: I look for chunks. Sometimes I do think about the story.

Researcher: Do you ever do anything else?

Student: Well, I just think about the helping hand that my teacher has on the wall and I use all the strategies.

Stephanie made explicit reference to the “Helping Hand” on the wall, which indicated that she had an alternate plan of action if what she tried initially did not work. Stephanie’s instructional reading level at the end of the 12-week strategy instruction was at Level 24 based on DRA, a substantial book level increase. Other alternate strategies were referred to as well. Twenty-four references were made to “using the picture” to figure out difficult words during final interviews, while pictures were mentioned six times during final DRA interviews for a total of 30 references. This was followed by “looking at the word,” mentioned 24 times; and “getting your mouth ready,” mentioned 14 times. “Asking for help” was mentioned three times in all during final interviews.

## Discussion

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Quantitative data revealed that students in the comparison group (traditional basal reading instruction) when compared with students who received and intervention group (cueing strategy instruction) differed significantly on the post-test on word reading and word meaning subtests. The data indicate that cueing strategies instruction did significantly increase word reading scores ( $p < .05$ ) and word meaning scores ( $p < .01$ ) but not passage comprehension or sen-

tence comprehension on a standardized reading test. It was found that students in both groups made similar progress in overall reading achievement, regardless of the method of instruction. Since the intervention group started with lower scores yet surpassed the comparison group, an instructional period longer in duration, perhaps 18 or 20-weeks, could have resulted in a positive significant difference in favor of the intervention group on overall reading achievement. A study of transactional strategies instruction (Brown, et al. 1996) reported gains in standardized reading achievement after one year of strategy training.

Quantitative data were supported by qualitative shifts observed in the intervention group. Time and time again, students initially reported they would sound out the word or just ask for help, knowing little else to try. However, after the cueing strategy instruction, these students were able to confidently discuss several strategies for figuring out difficult words. It was also noticed that students rarely mentioned asking for help after the strategy training. This indicates that students who received the training were equipped to independently handle their own reading situations, without relying on help from others.

Influence of the cueing strategy instruction in knowledge and use of reading strategies were apparent. The first most prevalent response given during the initial interview was on attempting to sound out difficult words. This finding is in agreement with Walker (2000) when she stated that students at this age tend to rely most heavily on graphophonic cues. It is also suspected that parents, caregivers and even peers of young children say "sound it out" as soon as a child pauses at a difficult word. Traditional phonics-based instruction, prevalent for decades, is deeply embedded in those who were taught that the goal of reading is to decode the printed text.

The second most prevalent response given by children during the initial interviews was to "ask for help." It appeared that, aside from sometimes faulty attempts to decode difficult words, many students simply had no other known strategy to use. Therefore, they appealed for help. Allington's (1978, 1980) research on teacher verbal feedback indicated that teachers most often simply provide the problem word when the student pauses. Perhaps teachers and students alike are at a loss when sounding out does not work.

This interview data was supported by the DRA interviews which occurred after reading a short passage. In this situation the most recurring response was sound it out. The second most recurring response was "I don't know." It was apparent that the majority of this group had but one strategy, that of accessing the graphophonic system (sounding it out). When that strategy failed, they had little recourse but to seek outside help or simply give up. Several students mentioned other strategies, which indicated that some students were attempting to access other cueing systems, but results showed that initially, the se-

mantic and syntactic cueing systems, or the combination of either of these systems with the graphophonic system, were largely ignored.

After the cueing strategy intervention, student responses to both interviews were quite different. By reading and rereading the data, it was determined that students used a variety of reading strategies in both interview settings, instead of relying primarily on graphophonic cues as they did initially. "Sounding it out" decreased from 85 references to 39 references, less than half than were made prior to cueing strategies instruction. A large increase in "looking for chunks," from 11 references prior to the instruction to 69 references after the intervention indicates that students were using more efficient alternatives to decoding rather than trying to sound out each sound. The major difference in the final interviews is that students seemed to have built a repertoire of alternative strategies, encompassing all the language cueing systems, to use when attempting to figure out an unknown word. Initially, students referred primarily to "sounding it out" or "asking for help." In contrast, after the intervention the students reported using a wide range of strategies, with the need to ask for outside assistance greatly diminishing. Students mentioned an average of six strategies during reading interviews at the completion of the study even though only five different strategies were taught. They began generating strategies on their own. As Clay (1991) has suggested, these students evidenced qualities of confident, self-extending readers, readers able to construct meaning by accessing cueing systems on increasingly difficult texts.

## **Conclusion**

Quantitative results revealed that cueing strategies instruction did significantly increase word reading ability but not overall reading achievement on a standardized reading test when compared with students who received traditional reading instruction. Using standardized, group-administered tests of reading performance may not be the most appropriate manner in which to assess reading performance in light of student reading strategy use (Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). These tests do not provide information as to which strategies were employed during test-taking, if any. Although the GRADE test was chosen for its similarities to natural text reading selections, it is still composed primarily of fill-in-the-blank items on short pieces of text, which are not closely aligned with natural reading processes. However, because reading achievement in today's elementary schools is measured by means of standardized tests, the authors felt it necessary to use an equivalent testing instrument when measuring the reading performance of both the comparison group and the intervention group.

Qualitative shifts in students revealed, however, that the strategy instruc-

tion did assist in building a repertoire of strategies for use when decoding and comprehending texts. As evidenced by the shifts in student awareness of strategies and student ability to verbalize a variety of strategies at the conclusion of the study, it is recommended that teachers include these whole group lessons, combined with scaffolding through prompting and discussion, throughout the school year so that students continue to develop self-extending systems. These self-extending systems will allow students to confidently attempt more and more difficult texts. Explicit teaching focused on strategy instruction reduces the departmentalization of reading skills and encourages students to become active constructors of meaning.

Further research should be conducted on teaching the cueing strategies in order to further refine the balance of explicit instruction with appropriate scaffolding experiences necessary to improve strategy awareness, strategy use, and overall reading achievement.

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# INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE FOR U.S. CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS: IN SEARCH OF DIFFERENCE

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## Abstract

*This commentary and review of international literature for children and young adults compares the breadth and quantity of international literature available eight years ago in the United States to the current market. The author addresses the concern that while more international literature has become available for children and young adults during the last ten years, the United States is still primarily importing books from England and Europe or publishing books by non-native writers. Because young readers would be better served by greater attention to difference, the author argues for a wider selection of literature for children and young adults, for more books that were originally written for a non-U.S. audience, and for a teaching emphasis that includes cultural differences. In addition, instructional suggestions are included.*

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*We require to be nourished by other cultures and by other ages. With-out our bridges to them we would be isolated, insular, falsely arrogant—not to say inbred. Without this exchange we would suffer a kind of cultural anemia.* (Fenton, 1977, p. 54)

Iranian writer Azar Nafisi, in *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2004) describes a remarkable experience in international reading. Her memoir recounts a world of Iranian students reading classic Western texts while wearing the veil and surviving an Islamic fundamentalist revolution. As Nafisi's supposedly seditious teaching at the university is curtailed so that eventually she can only teach privately, she describes her university women students com-

ing into her home, taking off their veils, and discussing *Lolita* (Nabokov, 1955) and *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) and *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813), taking complex characters from another time and place into their lives and their thinking. She writes that the students were hoping “to find a link between the open spaces the novels provided and closed ones [they] were confined to” (p. 19), and did, in fact, find themselves oddly reflected in or illuminated by literature meant for another audience.

What is especially striking about Nafisi’s college-age students is how well they read. The questions many of us concerned with literacy education will ask ourselves while reading Nafisi’s account are these: How did these students learn to read this well, this passionately, making deep and urgent connections to their own lives? How does their reading of novels from cultures markedly different from their own help them to know themselves and their world? What kind of literary experiences did these adult Iranian readers of the western canon have as children? And, by extension, how can educators and teachers of children in the United States help students to read well internationally? How can we get our students to a similarly productive reading stance?

This examination of issues in international literature for U.S. children began with the premise that one of the benefits of international literature is that it causes readers to “explore alternative ways of thinking and living” (Cullinan & Galda, 1998, p. 287). At its best, reading internationally allows readers to step into and experience another culture and, as was true of Nafisi’s students, frees us to imagine other ways of living our lives and of organizing our relationships.

Eight years after I finished my dissertation research, new coursework at my university allowed me to return to the scholarship of international children’s and young adult literature and examine what and how this literature has changed. More international literature has become available for U.S. readers, but other than some recent exceptions, the books are primarily coming from the same northern European countries as they always have, or they are penned by non-native writers. However, we may be on the cusp of change, and thus I argue that we need to emphasize difference in what we publish and read, and, as an extended example, examine the literature of Guatemala. Finally, recent scholarship from various fields offer guidance in how teachers can approach international texts in their teaching, and again I emphasize the need to highlight differences to help students confront their world with more complexity.

For several years the standard definition of international literature has denoted books written originally for readers of one country or culture, and then imported, translated if necessary, and republished for the readers of another culture (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1993; Stan, 1999; Tomlinson,

1998). *Pippi Langstrumpf*, or as we know it, *Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgren, 1950), is international literature for readers in the United States, Germany or Iran, but not from Sweden. Therefore, scholars have offered different definitions to describe literature of this type. For example, Hancock (2000) uses the term "cross-cultural literature" to describe books written by an author outside the culture with "the intention to . . . foster acceptance of cultural diversity or to encourage constructive intercultural relationships" (p. 169). Freeman and Lehman (2001) expand the idea of international literature to include books "written and published first in other countries other than the United States" (p. 10), books by immigrants to the United States that are published here, books written by non U.S. citizens that are published here first, and books written by U.S. citizens that are published here but set elsewhere. They use the term "international" alternately with "global." For this article, the standard definition of international literature is used, which is appropriate not so much for purposes of classifying a particular book or author's work, but for the discussion of the narrow range of books being imported into the United States.

## How Much International Literature Do We Read?

The United States has lagged far behind other western countries in exposing its children to international literature. Throughout the 1990s, U.S. researchers noted the relatively small number of children's books published within the United States that came from other countries. According to a review of publishers' information, Stan (1992) reported that 4% of children's books published in the United States were translated, while the comparable figure for Scandinavia was 55%. Metcalf and Moebius (1995) categorized 10% of children's books as international in the United States with a comparable figure of 40-60% in all of Europe. So, for example, if European children read 10 books in school each year, 5 of those books were likely to be imports, but U.S. readers would be lucky to have even 1. Seven years after her first report, Stan (1999) found the U.S. number had only gone up to 5%. In contrast, Austrian literacy experts claim that 60% of their children's reading is translated (Burkhardt, B. & Haller, K. Personal communication, June 24, 2005), and although Austrian elementary school teachers emphasize the books of Austrian writers in the curriculum, most of the remaining 40% are imported from Germany. In a recent poll of 40,000 New Zealand children on their favorite books, the top 12 authors chosen were international writers (see "Top 50 Children's Books," n.d.). Clearly children from other parts of the world have more international exposure to literature than ours do.

However, in the last eight years, more international books have become available in the United States, and the situation continues to improve. Since

the first one came out in 1998, the number of U.S. children that have read the *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005) books is staggering. Thousands of U.S. children are entering imaginatively into a fantasy world that conveys bits of British life, especially British boarding school culture that touts the value of education—not very typical in popular stories in the United States. More recently, Scholastic publishers have published German Cornelia Funke's engrossing adventure, *The Thief Lord* (2002), for their book clubs, and her *Tintenherz*, with the English title of *Inkheart* (2004), has been followed by a sequel, *Inkspell* (2005). British author David Almond's fine books especially *Skellig* (2000); *Kit's Wilderness* (2001); and *Heaven's Eyes* (2002) are easily available, as are a number of new fantasies from the United Kingdom. Phillip Pullman's complex and philosophical fantasies, *His Dark Materials Trilogy* (2003), may be the most significant of them. However, Jenny Nimmo's *Children of the Red King* series (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005) for younger readers and Stroud's still emerging *Bartimaeus Trilogy* (2003, 2004, 2006) are also available in libraries and bookstores. Many of these imported titles are being well reviewed in library and teacher journals, and thus perhaps will enter the mainstream reading world for U.S. children.

The American Library Association established a book award in 2000 for young adult fiction of high literary quality, the Michael L. Printz Award. The Printz has become a widely publicized award that promotes the reading of teens from ages 12 to 18 and is particularly significant in this discussion because it includes books previously published in other countries. While most teachers in the United States would know the Caldecott and Newbery Awards, these are limited to publications by U.S. writers. The European awards often recognize a work of distinction from abroad. For example, one of the five winners from Germany's annual Jugendliteraturpreis consistently goes to a foreign writer. Thus the Printz Award puts the United States more in line with other countries with a highly visible book award that includes texts from other countries. Since its inception in 2000, two out of five Printz winners have been written by British writers, *Postcards from No Man's Land* (Chambers, 2002) and *Kit's Wilderness* (Almond, 2001). In addition, there has been an imported title on the winner or honor list in five of the six years of its existence. Since the Printz books are typically purchased by public and middle- and high-school libraries, more international books are now available and reaching the hands of U.S. children.

Two publishing companies that have influenced international reading habits in the last eight years merit mentioning. A forward-looking U.S. publisher, Front Street Books, entered into co-production arrangements with an overseas publisher, Lemniscat from the Netherlands. This has meant that several excellent children's or young adult titles, such as *Bruises* (DeVries, 2003) and *Asphalt Angels* (Holtwijk, 2003) from the Dutch market are also available

for U.S. readers. The Canadian publisher, Groundwood Books, was already invested in multicultural literature and now has a new imprint, Libros Tigrillo, which includes Spanish language and English language books. These are written and illustrated by an excellent group of Central and South American authors and artists. Groundwood is certainly not alone in creating a Spanish list. However, founder and editor Patricia Aldana's commitment to publishing the best of "writing and illustration from the Americas," (Aldana, P. Personal communication, May 12, 2005) is laudable and has resulted in the publication of five or six Latino-related books, and two or three books in Spanish each year (Otero-Boisvert, 2001). In addition, Aldana has insisted that the publishers do "nothing to change the content of these books to make them more palatable to North Americans" (Aldana, P. Personal communication, May 12, 2005).

## What Kind Of International Reading Occurs In The United States?

Even while the impulse may be to offer congratulations for finally opening U.S. children's reading doors to titles from diverse places, it is instructive to notice where these imported books originate. The Batchelder Award, an American Library Association award that promotes international literature, is given annually to a U.S. publisher for the best book in translation for children or young adults. Nist's (1988) examination of Batchelder data showed that 13 of 20 books were written in Germanic languages and most had European settings. The situation has not changed. Of the 16 winners since Nist collected her data, 10 are from Northern European languages and 2 of the Hebrew translations are set in Europe (see "Batchelder Award," n.d.). White's research on successful translations of children's books, defined as books that stayed in print four years or more and were reviewed in a major review source, was carried out first in 1992 and then again in 2000. White found that with few exceptions, imported books for U.S. children come from the Western European countries, primarily from Germany and France, and that the countries represented had not changed significantly during the time between the two studies. As Stan (1999) pointed out in her overview of international children's literature by region, "international children's books to which U.S. children are exposed do not represent a microcosm of the greater world of international children's literature" (p. 168). Similarly, four of the five imported winners of the Printz Awards were from England and one was from Canada. Thus although there has been a greater quantity of children's literature available from abroad, those countries that have been represented have societies that are not radically different from ours, and their stories have offered the least amount of cultural difference to our children.

Some educators have contended that U.S. students are insular and parochial compared to children of other western countries (Caywood, 1994; Kazemek, 1993), and one wonders if this might partly be true because of the limited reading diet. Could it be that besides our relative geographical isolation, a lack of experience reading international texts might contribute to “insularity” and “cultural anemia” mentioned in the epigraph to this article (Fenton, 1977, p.54)? One is also struck with U.S. political alliances with England and with the fact that many of the international books for children and young adults come from there. If U.S. children were reading well-loved books from other parts of the world, might they be more acculturated to friendships with children of other nations? Unlike Nafisi’s students, whose reading was of cultures far removed from the Iranian part of the world, it is as though we in the States have decided to take a trip down the street but have stopped before coming to the corner.

A book that challenges us to journey further is *The Friends* (Yumoto, 1998), translated from Japanese and published by Front Street Press. Western readers can step into the lives of three 12 year-old Japanese boys, who go to soccer camp, and struggle to love their families, and in many ways seem similar to U.S. boys. Yet the cultural details of their friendship with the old man, and the old man’s raw stories of his war experiences, confront U.S. readers with difference. If readers identify with the three boys, they will experience an intergenerational friendship, which is not a common phenomenon in the United States. If they come to care about the old man, readers will be moved by his war experiences and may be struck with the realization that they have become empathetic toward an old man who fought on the other side during World War II. This provides an opportunity for readers to take in other points of view and may, in turn, cause them to reflect on their own lives in new ways.

Yumoto’s *The Friends* (1998), which was written by a Japanese author for Japanese readers, is, for U.S. readers, international. Does it matter whether *The Friends* was written by a U.S. resident who happened to set his book in Japan or by a native Japanese who told her story in her native country? Do these distinctions matter? Ten years ago multicultural scholars and children’s writers hotly debated issues of authenticity and who can or should tell a people’s story (Harris, 1996; Seto, 1995; Yolen, 1994). The difference between the usual definition of international versus global and cross-cultural literature raises similar “sticking points” to those raised by multiculturalists. Of course U.S. children can benefit from all kinds of well-told stories. Gifted writers who do their research carefully can transcend their own cultural lenses to write sensitively about people from other countries, and of course the quality of the writing should be our standard of measurement. But why not look deliberately for those books that were written for the children of another culture, for



others' eyes? Why not look for those books that were written to be part of other children's socialization processes, books written by citizens of other countries? In a speech, publisher Stephen Roxburgh of Front Street Books says, "Books originally written in another language and published in another country aren't about assimilation into American culture . . . They present lives that are not premised on our assumptions and don't focus on our cultural concerns" (2004, p. 50), and, I would add, are necessary for us so that we see others' and our own lives in new ways. Educators, particularly teacher educators, need to help U.S. readers understand the value of seeking out differences, of discovering what stories adults from other parts of the world are giving to their children to read, and of going beyond the narrow range of books that are currently available. These differences matter because our current ways of presenting imported literature to children often limit them to books within their comfort zone. This zone limits them because their reading has been interpreted for them, and they are seeing other cultures through a lens that the western world wants to emphasize. As writer Eve Tal noted, ". . . when we take the stories of others and reshape them to fit the concepts and models of our own culture, we commit a double transgression: we close the window on another culture and merely provide one more mirror to our own" (Henderson & May, 2005, p. 370).

Yokota and Bates (2005) described the same problem in their discussion of Asian American literature:

Disney's film presentation of the legendary Chinese folk heroine Mulan is an example of how difficult it has been for Asian themes to be interpreted accurately when the goal is to appeal to Western audiences rather than inform or challenge them. Mo and Shen (2000) illustrate how, in the Disney movie, motives of Mulan to fight in her father's place are filtered through a Western lens of self-fulfillment and personal growth rather than the more accurate (but less familiar to mainstream U.S. audiences) theme of filial responsibility and respect for elders. (p. 327)

If teachers rely on these westernized stories to internationalize the curriculum, they may be working with skewed versions of other cultures. Furthermore, stories that have been westernized may delight or instruct our students in various ways, but they are less likely to cause an exploration of other ways of living. If our students read a Chinese retelling of Mulan for Chinese children, they are more likely to notice the theme of respecting elders, more likely to ask why this theme matters, and more likely to question if they hold the same values. Therefore, one can reason that it is time for our children to see what children of other nations are reading. We in the United States need to go beyond the kinds of global literature we currently have available and lead students to discover books in translation, books from other countries that were written for other children.



## The Example of Guatemala

Some countries, however, especially those with low per capita income, simply do not have a tradition of writing and publishing books and their own stories for children. Guatemala is a good example and may be representative of other third world countries. Hundreds of U.S. parents have traveled to the small Central American country to collect adopted children. In the last eight years Guatemala was either third or fourth in numbers of immigrant visas issued to orphans coming into the U.S. (see "Immigrant visas," n.d.). However, if these U.S. parents wished to read Guatemalan children's literature, literature intended for Guatemalan children, there has been practically nothing available except for a few legends and tales. Thankfully, there has been a small body of fictional work set in Guatemala with Guatemalan child protagonists, books meant for U.S. readers, and thus there is cross-cultural and global literature for U.S. children to read from Guatemala.

For example, Omar Castaneda, born in Guatemala but raised in the U.S., has written two novels, *Among the Volcanoes* (1993) and *Imagining Isabel* (1994) and a picture book *Abuela's Weave* (1995) about life in the mountains and small villages. Cameron, who has lived in Guatemala for 20 years as an adult, has written a slim chapter book, *The Most Beautiful Place in the World* (1988) and a fine novel, *Colibri* (2003), both of which depict current life of Guatemalan children and reveal Cameron's respect and love for her adopted culture. Mikaelson, a world citizen with several years of education from Central American schools, has written two young adult novels, *Red Midnight* (2003) and *Tree Girl* (2004) that depict some of Guatemala's tortured history to U.S. children, and he doesn't neglect to point out the responsibility of the U.S. government in the afterwords of the novels.

Writing in English for U.S. readers, these three authors created books that exemplify Freeman and Lehman's definition (2001) of global literature. Their books tell riveting stories and, particularly in the case of *Colibri* (Cameron, 2003), evoke the colorful markets and amazing scenery with beautiful language. However, one wonders how these stories would be shaped differently or told differently—or if they would be told at all—if they were written originally for Guatemalan children. Groundwood Books, with its distribution in the United States, may answer that question and will certainly provide U.S. children and youth with more Guatemalan books. Amelia Lau Carling, born in Guatemala City and now a U.S. citizen, wrote a charming picture book, *Mama and Papa Have a Store* (1998) about her experiences growing up as a Chinese-Guatemalan, and originally published it with Dial Press. But her new publisher, Groundwood Books, hopes to make *Sawdust Carpets* (2005) available in both Guatemala and in North America (Aldana, 2005). Elise Amada, another native Guatemalan, has books entitled *Barrilete: A Kite for the Day of the Dead* (1999) and *Cousins* (2005). These have also

been written for both Guatemalan children and North Americans as her target audience. Even Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu has a charming Maya Guatemalan children's book that will soon be published by Groundwood (2005). Overall, the international literature available for U.S. child readers is coming from a narrow band of countries (Nist, 1988; White, 1992; White, 2000). However, as the case of Guatemala depicts, we may be on the cusp of change, both in the inclusion of nonwestern European books into U.S. markets and in the new responsiveness to publishing texts by native writers.

## Teaching Cultural Differences

Finally, we need to reflect on what our teachers and children do when they read books that come from outside U.S. boundaries. Scholars from various fields can guide classroom teachers as they use international literature in the classroom. There are three practices that get in the way of productive readings. First, students tend to overlook setting and those cultural markers that define a story within a specific time and place. Second, as with all literature, readers tend to shy away from elements of stories that cause discomfort and threaten our schemas of the world. Last, readers tend to discover similarity to the neglect of its counterpart, difference, and do not put those two opposing concepts into balance. Careful teaching, though, as many literature scholars have attested, can aid students in confronting difference (Encisco, 1997; Graff, 1992; Henderson & May, 2005; Rosenblatt, 1956).

Research has suggested that students often do not pay much attention to the setting of a story, to where an author is from, or to those markers in a book that ground it in a reality outside of the covers. In some books, of course, setting is more of a backdrop to a story than a key element, but students are also often not cognizant of the nationality of the characters. Egoff, in her classic book on children's literature (1981), claims that children do not care that Heidi is Swiss or Pippi is Swedish, but that they only care whether the characters are believable and wonderful. In a study that examined 8th grade girls' responses to international texts (Bloem, 1997), students asserted that they could not keep the exact location and setting in their heads. They experienced the settings but did not tie an actual physical location to their awareness of a time and of a place. If, as Birkerts (1994) suggests in his lengthy lament of how the act of reading is becoming a lost art, readers "suspend our place in the real world" (p. 93), perhaps students enter into reading as though they are entering a fantasy world. Clearly more research is needed to help us understand this fascinating aspect of making sense of international literature.

But there are several concrete things teachers can do to ground students' reading to real places. For one, she can fill the classroom with maps and

images that correspond with the books. She should be intentional in helping students become aware of where a book originates, of a protagonist's nationality, and of various geographical, historical, and cultural details. If we hope that students will finish a book like *Colibri* (Cameron, 2003) and know that the setting they have just lived in within their minds has an actual existence in the mountains of Guatemala, that they attach a country's label to what they are visualizing, teachers will need to help students see the connections explicitly. Teachers, particularly of older students, will want to finish the study of a compelling international story with connections to current events, history, or social history.

Second, students often sidestep controversy, and thus teachers should not be timid about reading aloud or assigning difficult books and in addressing the controversies, both the large and abstract ones and the smaller ones that exist within and about texts. Graff (1992) argued that teachers need to teach the conflict. There are many ways to do this. The questions scholars ask about international and global literature, such as who can tell a story and what real difference does authenticity make to a reader who does not know the culture, can be powerful when students have an opportunity to explore them. While children may not have the expertise to be able to pronounce a text authentic or not, the complex questions draw them into the diverse viewpoints and deepen their readings. In addition, if within the text we probe the parts of a story or of a culture that trouble us, our thinking will be challenged in productive ways. For example, the mean-spirited comments to the Guatemalan refugees in Mikaelson's (2003) *Red Midnight* are likely to touch a nerve and to promote significant discussion. Students who have identified with the children in this survival story will be horrified with the reception they receive from the first set of U.S. citizens they encounter. Probing this passage will help students make sense of other viewpoints and reflect on the ways we treat outsiders. The spot where cultures and countries rub against each other is often a place where differences are noticeable and conflict resides, and teachers can use this to advantage when designing classroom conversations.

The simple questions, "Who was this story written for?" and "Whose point of view does this story leave out?" can lead to discussions of socio-cultural aspects of a text. As Encisco (1997) stated, "Literature's power is not in its capacity to present 'truer' version of differences (and resolutions of difference) but to open up dialogues about the construction and negotiation of differences we observe and live" (p. 34).

Third, readers, especially children, tend to be egocentric in their reading. They often place themselves squarely into the center of our stories, or remake a fictitious character into an image of themselves. This is not a completely bad thing to do, since research has indicated that identifying with the

characters may lead us into more engaged readings (Bloem, 1997). The identification with a fictitious character may also lead to the understanding that people are similar, all around the world. In the previously mentioned examination of 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' responses to international literature (Bloem), five out of six middle school readers of international literature repeatedly expressed surprise at how similar people seemed to be around the globe. In addition, even though they were convinced before they began their reading that "others" were fundamentally different beings, the students identified strongly with the various Norwegian, South African, or Colombian protagonists. Not only did they bond with the other characters as they read more of the literature, they also became dismissive of cultural differences. Only one student, who had far more international exposure than the others and several international friendships, spoke of human similarity as a "given." Even before the reading experience, she was much more interested in the "special cultures" that people came from than were the other readers. This leads one to wonder if perhaps there is a developmental process in children moving from an expectation of difference, to recognition of similarity, and then to a squaring of the two oppositions. Clearly we could benefit from more research on this aspect of reading international literature.

While it is true that humanity has much in common, similarity is only part of the experience. Fishman (1995) called this the Disney/CocaCola approach, which implied that since "It's A Small World After All...we can teach the world to sing in perfect harmony" (p.76). This way of thinking about diversity is simplistic and glosses over the differences that can't be or shouldn't be easily dismissed. Exposure to international literature must go beyond similarity to also explore difference. Yes, people share human similarities, yet our cultures shape us differently, and our backgrounds as well as our personalities create diversity of thought and of living. To ignore difference is essentially a conservative, egocentric, arrogant act. We benefit from another balance, from internalizing another way of being in and interacting with the world. The act of considering another's ways helps us to learn about ourselves and helps us be more deliberate in our choices or actions.

Cullinan and Galda (1998) addressed this when they asked the following:

Do books simply contribute knowledge about a particular culture, or do they invite reader transformation and promote cross-cultural affective understanding? Do books simply present differences or do they invite readers to explore alternative ways of thinking and living? (p.287)

Therefore, as teachers observe students reading and entering another culture or entering into a character's consciousness, they should first draw students into an active engagement with the stories and identification with char-

acters, but then complete the reading by guiding them to a reflection that makes sense of what it means to be "other."

"Celebrate diversity" has become something of a catch phrase, an injunction to adopt a certain attitude about differences, and given recent international acts of terrorism around the globe, it often has a hollow ring. In order to truly explore our differences through reading imported literature to and with children, we will have to recognize a wider range of books than the set we currently import. And in our teaching of international literature, we will have to help students see that difference is not something to be shunned. Recognizing difference honestly in literature and learning from someone else's experience or worldview is a messy business. But, like Nafisi's veiled students in Iran, our lives will be richer for the effort.

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# STUDY SKILLS IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE

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## Abstract

*The time spent using technology in schools has increased tremendously. Technology has had a major impact in the area of study skills usage. Rogers' (1984) comprehensive Study/Reading Skills Checklist has been a valuable assessment tool for teachers to determine the variety of study skills used by their students. The authors recognized the need to revise Roger's work to adapt to computer-based environments. Reflections from informal observations and conversations are described and lead to a proposed survey to modify this checklist. Plans for future research into the frequency of use of each of the strategies will result in the creation of contemporary study skills checklists for both paper and computer-based reading.*

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The use of technology in schools has increased exponentially, as a visit to the site of the National Center of Educational Statistics (2004) indicates. For instance, the percentage of schools with Internet access increased from 3% in 1994 to 87% in 2001. There is no doubt that young learners spend a great deal of time using computers (Oppenheimer, 2003). Furthermore, experts in reading education acknowledge the need for teachers to acquire technology skills. The International Reading Association (IRA) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) jointly set the following standard for students, thus assuming that teachers can instruct accordingly, "Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge" (NCTE, 2004).

One important area where technology has had a major impact is in study skills usage. The IRA-NCTE standard (NCTE, 2004) demonstrates the important role that technology plays in study skills. Study skills and behaviors are an important part of reading to learn. However, they are often neglected both



by teachers and students. Gettinger and Seibert (2002) distinguish between study skills/strategies and study behaviors or tactics in this way: "A study tactic is a sequence of steps or a specific procedure . . . whereas a skill is operationalized and presented as a sequence of observable, isolated behaviors" (p. 352). Gettinger and Seibert write that they consider the terms study skills and study strategies as synonymous, and the terms study behaviors or study tactics as synonymous. This is the interpretation we use in this article. Such an interpretation is important, as it helps explain how study skills/strategies can remain constant over time while study behaviors/tactics may change as the environment for study may change.

This paper focuses on study skills/strategies and study behaviors/tactics, and how they might have changed over 20 years, in definition, behaviors, and assessment strategies. In 1984, Rogers defined study skills as the deliberate procedures (strategies) a learner uses to retain information. For instance, he noted that when studying, one reads more slowly, and uses techniques (behaviors) such as underlining, note-taking, rereading, and reading material aloud. He noted that such behaviors change the way one reads but are still part of the process of reading comprehension. Rogers classified study skills into four basic categories: (a) study-reading comprehension skills, including interpreting graphic aids and following directions; (b) location skills, including varying reading rate and location of information; (c) retention, including remembering what is studied; and (d) organizing information.

Because study skills are personal, and are developed by the learner to accommodate the learner's own style of reading and study, Rogers felt that an informal assessment driven by self-perceptions was the preferred means of assessing study skills. Once teachers realize what students report they lack in study skills, then they can provide appropriate instruction. For instance, a teacher might select the study tactic SQ3R (i.e., survey, question, read, recite, review) if students lack a way to organize and locate information (Huber, 2004). Rogers proposed a checklist of study skills as an efficient way to help teachers assess students' study skills and learners assess their own study skills. He drew from Karlin's (1977) checklist and his own experiences in designing the checklist.

We use Rogers as our starting point to consider whether study skills and tactics have changed or are still similar to those identified in 1984. Next, we ask: If study skills or study tactics have changed, has the way one assesses them also changed over the past 20 years? If the study skills or tactics have changed, and the assessment process has not changed, then what changes are now necessary?

## Have Study Skills Changed?

In comparison with other reading topics, few articles about study skills have been published in the past 20 years (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Huber, 2004). What has been published seems to have changed the picture of study skills very little. In fact, McBride (1994) emphasizes how little study skills have changed over the years when he uses Isaac Newton as the best model for effective use of study skills. Blai (1993) identified comprehension of main ideas, self-monitoring, physical setting, organization, goal-setting and pacing as crucial to effective studying. And three years prior to Blai, Clemmons (1990) listed very similar study skills. Harris and Hodges (1995) defined study skills as the “techniques and strategies that help a person read or listen for specific purposes with the intent to remember” (p. 245). Their definition is very similar to that of Rogers (1984), Blai, Clemmons and McBride, thus demonstrating little change within a ten-year span. And, 10 years beyond Harris and Hodges, there is still agreement that study skills represent good reading skills and require comprehension with intent to learn. For instance, Gettinger and Seibert (2002) propose the following study skills categories: (a) cognitive and metacognitive; (b) repetition-based; and (c) procedural. Downey’s (2000) top 10 strategies mirror Gettinger and Seibert’s categories, as do Pearce’s (1998) “right” study skills. Purdie and Hattie (1999) believe that there is not one set of study skills that fits every learner, but that the study skills they present as a result of a meta-analysis of 52 studies are consistent with those presented by others over the past 20 years. So, it appears that the agreement on what study skills are has remained constant over a 20 year span.

## What Has Changed?

Today, the professional literature seems to place more emphasis on the age at which learners should start to use study skills. Some authors stress that study skills should be used by younger learners (Alber, Nelson & Brennan, 2002; Richardson & Morgan, 2003; Strauss, 2003). Rogers’ instrument, as well as comments by those cited above, seem to assume that study skills are the province of adolescents and college readers (Rogers, 1984). Yet, today children as young as first grade are being taught note-taking, goal-setting and monitoring activities that are certainly part of the commonly accepted study skills.

Another change is the emphasis on tactics and behaviors that learners are using—or not using! Learners spend less time studying today than 15 years ago (“High School Seniors,” 2003). More attention is being paid to the concern that students lack a repertoire of study skills (American School Counselor Association, 1999). There is more emphasis on providing information

about effective study strategies, and that study skills intervention is necessary and does work (Alber, Nelson & Brennan, 2002; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Purdie & Hattie, 1999).

The major change reflected in the literature and in instructor observations is that computer-based study skills are needed in today's world. To remain competitive in a global economy, students must know how to study in a different environment than they have in the past century. Web-based reading and study are different than paper-based study, and sometimes produces less efficient study and resultant learning (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002). It is not the study skills that are different, though; it is the tactics that a learner must use to study in a computer-based environment. Studies show that learners can adapt to computer-based study tactics (Anderson-Inman, Knox-Quinn & Szymanski, 1999; Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002).

As part of this change to consider study skills in a computer-based environment, more attention is being paid to diverse learners, such as learning disabled and English Second Language (ESL) students. Such diverse learners often need to find different study tactics because of their challenging learning situations (Knox & Anderson-Inman, 2001; Richardson & Morgan, 2003). There are three attributes of study that influence computer-based study, according to Anderson-Inman, Knox-Quinn and Szymanski (1999): (a) studying is an independent task and so computer-based study has to be conducted in an independent setting; (b) studying has to be what the student wants to do, and thus computer-based study must be compatible with what the student understands; and (c) studying assumes that content is to be mastered, thus students must be seriously engaged. Anderson-Inman's (1998, 2005) work on study skills tactics in computer-based environments reflects ways to help learners devise study tactics that meet these conditions in computer-based study.

## Has the Way One Assesses Study Skills Changed Over the Past 20 Years?

It does appear that study skills have not changed over the past 20 years, but that study tactics have changed. In that case, shouldn't the manner in which study skills are assessed also change to reflect new tactics that students are—or should—use to master study skills? In this section, we consider the current study skills instruments in use, and whether they reflect these new tactics.

The Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) was published in 1987 by Weinstein, Palmer and Schulte and is now used in college settings in over 30 countries (Hewlett, Boonstra, Bell & Zumbo, 2000). Since its publication came only three years after Rogers' checklist was published in 1984, one

might not expect the LASSI to reflect much difference in study skills and study tactics being measured. In fact, the LASSI is very similar to Rogers' instrument, except that it has been standardized. The LASSI measures attitude, motivation, time management, anxiety, concentration, information processing, main idea selection, use of study aids, and test strategies. According to Murphy and Alexander (1998), the LASSI has an "understudied measure" that seems to yield reliable scores. The LASSI is widely recognized in the field of study skills, in part because it is the only instrument that is well-known. It has been used in research to determine if it has cross-cultural generalizability, which it was found to have (Olaussen & Braten, 1998). Hewlett, Boonstra and Zumbo (2000) cautioned that use of the LASSI as a self-report with poorer readers is inadvisable. The LASSI is a self-report and self-perception measure, just as Rogers' assessment. It does not contain any specific items that question a learner about use of computer-based study tactics. It is important to note that the LASSI is now 18 years old.

Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986) developed an assessment to evaluate the self-regulatory process of effective study. Their instrument presents students with learning problems and asks them to propose solutions. The assessment is not widely used and is now almost 20 years old, having been introduced only 2 years after Rogers' assessment.

A much newer measure of reading strategies is the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSİ); it is designed to assess self-awareness and perceived use of reading-study strategies (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Learners rate how they use 30 different study strategies. The MARSİ is a promising new assessment, which may update study skills assessment (Richardson & Morgan, 2003). As with the LASSI, it has been standardized, although it is a self-perception assessment. The MARSİ does not contain computer-based items.

In 2005, Kelly and Johnson proposed the Time Use Efficiency Scale (TUES) to study time efficiency. This assessment is a seven-item assessment of time usage, based on student perceptions. Its scope is much narrower than that of the study skills assessments so far noted in this article. The TUES also does not contain any items about computer-based study.

## What Changes Are Now Necessary?

In summary, there were few significant new study skills assessments developed in the past 20 years. The ones that are currently used do not reflect the changes in thinking about study skills and tactics, particularly computer-based study tactics. A void exists between what has changed and what is used to assess study skills and tactics. Knowing the important study strategies and techniques needed for remembering content material in a com-

puter-based learning environment is essential for the success of modern students. How will students learn what they need to know how to do when they study in a computer-based environment if they are not guided to learn study tactics that apply? Unfortunately, most teachers do not seem to know about or value study strategies, from 20 years ago or from the present knowledge base, and are unsure how to integrate study skills with content (Jackson & Cunningham, 1994). This is so despite research that indicates that students who use a range of study skills achieve greater success in school (Purdie & Hattie, 1999) and research suggesting that good study habits lead to academic success (Jones, Slate, & Marini, 1995). Study-skill intervention programs do work, thereby indicating the important role teachers have in helping their students succeed by providing direct instruction in these strategies (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996). We concluded that it is time for a new study skills assessment instrument that reflects the 21st century and computer-based study tactics.

## What Observations Have Led to the Changes We Propose?

As we recognized the need for revising and/or creating a computer-based technology study skills checklist, we began to draw on our own changing study habits as a tool for modifying Roger's (1984) original work. Additionally, student and colleague study behaviors were considered in our initial modification of the study skills checklist. In the following section, reflections from informal conversations and observations are described in three sections that include author, colleague, and student perceptions of computer-based study skills.

### Author Perceptions

Through discussion, we found that our *concept* of study has not changed over time. We still need to study and do so regularly. Yet, we each have found ourselves adapting to an electronic literacy environment in both our work and personal lives. Our study skills and strategies now include track editing for revising and responding to written papers, insertion of electronic comments into documents, highlighting, and writing remarks and notes directly on electronic copies. What is unique about the use of these strategies is the frequency and level of skill each of us has in employing them. An irony exists among our team members because the senior member is the most technologically advanced and in reality, according to our own observations and conventional wisdom, should be the most reluctant to try computer-based study strategies. Both junior authors work with electronic materials on a daily basis, and are comfortable, yet not as savvy in an electronic environment that is becoming more of the standard, than the exception. We

have found that our new study skills, all employed electronically, enable us to organize and manage material efficiently as we learn to study it in a computer-based environment.

When we need information, we go directly to the university's on-line library and conduct an electronic search. Often we look for articles for use with our students that are in an electronic-format because computer-based texts provide easy and inexpensive access to information. Two of us still rely on paper copies of important texts for research purposes, while one only obtains a paper copy if the information is exclusively available in that format. Whenever possible this author obtains a PDF or word processed copy of the resource, reads from the computer screen, and marks it using the word processing features to signify the most important information to remember. Finally, she files the document either in a data base or an electronic folder within a location that makes sense for retrieval purposes. Each of us saves material on more than one drive so it will not be lost. We find ourselves resorting to paper-based materials less each day, but at least two of us still need enhanced skills in reading to learn from electronic texts.

## Colleague Perceptions

During the initial phase of our investigation into electronic study skills, we have found the information provided informally by our colleagues to be both insightful and thought provoking. We note that fellow professors spend a great deal of time perfecting their ability to locate and retrieve information from a variety of electronic sources. Locating information on the web requires systematic thinking as well as an extensive degree of patience. One colleague shares that it has taken years for her to learn the best way to navigate online databases to locate articles needed for research. Our colleagues believe that fine-tuning web and data base navigation skills will result in more efficient searching for relevant information.

Following a recent research presentation, Dr. Yifat Kolikant (personal communication, November 23, 2004), a visiting professor from Israel, shared a unique study strategy. In a discussion of the use of on-line resources, Dr. Kolikant noted that she rarely reads full articles when she is beginning a research project. She first locates the articles in a database, pulls them up and reads the abstract and references. Then she uses the search/find option in the word processor to locate information relevant to her topic. If the article provides important data during this initial review, she will then download the full text for further on-screen reading and note-taking. This strategy for finding information was new to us, but was commonplace for the faculty in computer science education at her university. Our visiting colleague shared that almost all of her research team members use this strategy on a regular

basis. We speculate that the use of certain study strategies may be developed, as this one was, by sharing within a closely connected group whose members have similar needs, interests, and technological expertise. The strategy shared by the Israeli professor demonstrates that the study skills employed in the 21st century make use of the computer-based tools available and reduce the need for tools used in the past.

As we shared our observations with participants in our session at the College Reading Association meeting in the fall of 2004, we found many common strategies in use among American educators working in computer-based environments. A common theme that emerged in our discussion was the challenge many educators feel as they make the transition from paper to electronic-based material. Many still rely on reading from a printed version of articles when they need to study. Although the participants reported using highlighting and note-taking in the paper-based environment, they have not translated these skills into computer-based environments.

## Student Perceptions

As we consider our experiences with adult students in our courses, we have found that the transition to the electronic environment has not been a smooth one. Just as college professors have varying degrees of experience and comfort in the electronic environment, so do our adult students. Our older students, who are not as accustomed to the electronic environment, struggle a bit more with study skills and strategies in this new age. But they too recognize that they need new skills. One of the best examples of this dramatic change in study environments is the card catalog, which our older students, and each of us, remember so well: that file in which cards were alphabetized and from which we looked up our references. Our younger students do not know this “dinosaur” at all.

We observe that our students, especially our younger students who have grown up with technology, use similar strategies, often much more advanced than our own. Our students report that they are distracted by pop-up ads and instant messages more often than the telephone. What enables them to learn and study is the ease of Internet resources.

There are, however, additional factors that we find to have an impact on our students’ use of study strategies in an electronic environment. One of us has discovered several challenges when posting articles for students to read on electronic reserve through our university library. First, students have wide-ranging access to technology. The version of Windows available on their home computers can make a difference in how easily they can access electronic texts; the older the version, the more difficult it is to download articles. Furthermore, the type of internet connection and the quality of the



internet service provider in use can play a huge role in a student's ability to access information. If a person is using a dial-up connection, it can take an hour for an article to download, which is in sharp contrast to someone using high-speed internet that downloads the article in a matter of seconds.

A second consideration that affects our students' ability to study content in an electronic-based environment is directly related to the wide range of technology skill levels among any particular class. It may be difficult to believe that there are adults who do not have any experience in turning on a computer, let alone connecting to the Internet. We assume in our 21st century college classes that students have a certain level of competence in using the computer. If we are going to provide the same educational opportunities for all of our students, we really cannot make this assumption. One issue that arose in classes attempting to access articles on electronic reserve involved the required use of a certain version of a software program installed on the computer. Many students were having difficulty retrieving the articles. Finally, the students determined they could solve the problem by downloading a free, updated version of the software. However, there is a certain skill level involved in downloading software and some students have this skill, while others do not.

A final mitigating factor for using computer-based study skills relates to the effect personal characteristics can play in student success with electronic texts. We have all encountered students who will doggedly try to learn something new and will not give up, even if they encounter frustration. On the other hand, we have also taught students who give up more easily, particularly when the going gets tough. We have observed how determination and perseverance can positively impact both our students' use of technology and their ability to study from electronic-based text.

As teachers of adult learners, we need to keep all these issues in mind when incorporating electronic texts into our teaching. We don't want to compromise student learning because technology issues hinder the learning process. We need to ensure that all our students have the opportunity to learn.

## The Educator's Role

It becomes our task as educators to realize how our students study today, and to use the electronic skills they have acquired to our advantage when teaching study skills. Part of our responsibility is to provide support and guidance along the way for our students as they make this transition to an electronic-dominated learning environment.



## Creating a Study Skills Survey

We propose a survey (see Appendix) that reflects our initial attempt at defining the essential study behaviors/tactics necessary for student success in a computer-based environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We considered Harris and Hodges' (1995) definition of study skills as we developed the eight categories of study skills on the survey. Seven of the categories of study skills/strategies, are based on Rogers' Study/Reading Skills Checklist (1984). As previously stated, Rogers used four categories for his checklist. We increased the number of strategy categories to help learners consider their own study behaviors/tactics more fully. For each category in the proposed survey, the boldfaced skill/strategy heading indicates the comparable category from Rogers' (1984) original checklist. An eighth category was created to address environmental factors. The Study Skills survey asks students to think generally about whether they use a particular skill/strategy, and *how* they use it (their behavior/tactic) with both electronic and paper materials. We recognize that students use many more behaviors in their study tactics repertoire than we have included; that is the nature of study as a personal process. Like Rogers' checklist, this survey is not meant to be exhaustive, but to stimulate a student to think about ways to study, and to help teachers know where to concentrate study tactics instruction. In future research, we intend to ask many students to use the survey and give us their suggestions about what specific study behaviors/tactics to reword, delete, and add so that the instrument will ultimately reflect what students often do as they study.

## Conclusion

In thinking about the experiences that our students, colleagues, and we have had in transitioning to an educational environment in which there is more of an emphasis on electronic texts, we realize that educators must know and teach appropriate study skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They should keep the following ideas in mind: (a) consider the level of students' basic technology skills; (b) assess study skills necessary for problem completion; (c) provide direct instruction and modeling of the foundation level skills necessary for success; (d) provide information and practice in these study skills; (e) make no assumptions that students have the same knowledge level as the instructor; and (f) point out the situations in which paper and electronic study strategies are different and the ways that similar strategies can be adapted in either environment. These ideas will provide our students with skills that will better prepare them to navigate electronic texts in the future.

Ultimately, our planned future research into the frequency of use of each of the strategies will result in the creation of contemporary study skills checklists for both paper and computer-based reading. The following questions

may help guide future research: (a) Are study strategies used in a paper-based material different from those used in an electronic material? If so, what are the differences? (b) Are study strategies instructors have taught for paper-based reading situations applicable for computer-based situations? (c) What do pre-service and practicing teachers identify as the study strategies they use with electronic texts? Conducting research to answer these questions will provide exciting information to better prepare our students for success!

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## Appendix: Survey to Determine Proposed Updated Study Skills Checklist

Please complete the following survey. Answer the questions in both columns.

Study Skills for Reading	How often do you use this skill when reading text from the COMPUTER screen?  Circle ONE. A-always F-frequently S-sometimes N-never	How often do you use this skill when reading a PAPER text?  Circle ONE. A-always F-frequently S-sometimes N-never
I have strategies for following directions (similar to Rogers #1):		
I read to understand important information	A F S N	A F S N
I read to understand important relationships	A F S N	A F S N
I read to understand important details	A F S N	A F S N
I have strategies for locating information (similar to Rogers #2):		
I use an on-line library catalog	A F S N	A F S N
I can find reference materials	A F S N	A F S N
I use a card catalog	A F S N	A F S N
I can use a search engine to find information	A F S N	Not applicable
I can find information in a dictionary	A F S N	A F S N
I can use guide words or letters to find a word	A F S N	A F S N
I can find word origins	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in a preface	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in the table of contents	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in a book chapter	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in headings	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in footnotes	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in a glossary	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in an index	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in an appendix	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information in an encyclopedia	A F S N	A F S N

I can find a phone number	A F S N	A F S N
I can find a map and driving directions	A F S N	A F S N
I can find specific information in a newspaper	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information using book parts such as title, author's name, edition and publisher	A F S N	A F S N
I can find information about the copyright of the text	A F S N	A F S N
When I want to show something is important, I highlight the text so it will pop out at me	A F S N	A F S N
When I want to show that something is important I underline the text so it will pop out at me	A F S N	A F S N
When I want to show that something is important, I mark the text in another way that will pop out at me (bold, text changes, etc.)	A F S N	A F S N
I have strategies for selecting information (similar to Rogers #3):		
I can use subheadings in text to find what I need to know	A F S N	A F S N
I ask myself questions while I am reading and studying so I can remember better	A F S N	A F S N
I have strategies for organizing information (similar to Rogers #4):		
I can create a way to remember information, such as mnemonic aids (like 3Rs = read, review, reflect)	A F S N	A F S N
I study in a way that follows a system, such as Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review= SQ3R	A F S N	A F S N
I have strategies for retaining information (similar to Rogers #3):		
I remember what I read by repeating the information	A F S N	A F S N
I remember what I read by taking notes	A F S N	A F S N
I remember what I read by drawing a picture or creating a graphic	A F S N	A F S N
I remember what I read by writing a summary	A F S N	A F S N
I remember what I read by making an outline	A F S N	A F S N
I use text editing to make notes on electronic text	Not applicable	A F S N
I have strategies for interpreting typographic and graphic aids (similar to Rogers #1) :		
I can usually look at a picture, chart, comic or graph and understand it	A F S N	A F S N

I have strategies for reading flexibly (similar to Rogers #2):

I use search and find to locate information	A F S N	A F S N
I can change how fast I read when I want to find only one piece of information	A F S N	A F S N
I can change how fast I read when I need to think and remember important information	A F S N	A F S N
I know how to preview—read over the text-quickly to get the general idea	A F S N	A F S N
Demonstrate good study habits:		
I know how to select a good environment for study: Few distractions Equipment at hand Plan time to study effectively Use time to study effectively	A F S N	A F S N

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BUILDING BRIDGES BEYOND  
THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

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# “GRAPPLING” WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT INSTRUCTION OF CONTENT LITERACY: A COLLABORATIVE MODEL

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## Abstract

*This paper describes a collaborative teacher education program that was implemented at a large, Midwestern university and a nearby urban, elementary school with a diverse student population. Teacher education programs across the country are looking for the best approaches to prepare teachers to meet the educational needs of diverse school populations and improve achievement for all students. The model for this program was designed to develop culturally relevant instruction through collaboration between university and P-12 faculty, focused content area literacy course instruction for teacher candidates, service learning, field experience, and candidate interactions with peers and classroom teachers. Specifically, the rationale for and details of the program components are presented as well as outcomes pertaining to the value of this collaborative, professional development model.*

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## Vignette

A teacher in an inner-city urban school stands before a group of fourth-grade students introducing them to the use of graphic organizers. She is sensitive to the cultural and linguistic differences in her classroom and cognizant of the challenges and opportunities this diversity presents to instructional delivery. After verbally explaining that a graphic organizer is used to connect related concepts or ideas, she places a circle on the board and writes



the word “inventors” in the center. Drawing a second circle, she writes the word “people” and extends a line between the two. Students are asked to name famous inventors that they have been reading about and discussing this week. Using the names offered by students, including African Americans they have studied, the teacher adds new circles connected to the word “people.”

The teacher repeats the process, using the word “characteristics,” and draws a line between the original word and the third circle. At the back of the room, two students engage in a whispered conversation about the process. With a look of bafflement on his face, the first student mutters, “I don’t get it.”

Looking just as perplexed, the second student follows the process with some concentration, finally turning to the other one with excitement. “It’s easy! It’s a grapplin’ organizer! See, it’s just like in the movies . . . She shoots out a grapplin’ hook, and pulls the two things together. You know how they throw out that hook and it lets the guys move from one place to the next. . . . Well that’s what she’s doin’ . . . Watch her!”

## Introduction

This story describes how teachers plan and implement instruction that encourages students to actively engage in learning. This process was observed by preservice teachers involved in the collaborative program described in this paper. This approach supports students in applying what they know, their schema, consistent with culturally relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995b) and with content area literacy activities (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). According to Ladson-Billings (2001), culturally relevant pedagogy is based on three propositions about what contributes to successful learning for all students, especially African American students. These propositions are: “(1) successful teachers focus on students’ academic achievement, (2) successful teachers develop students’ cultural competence, and (3) successful teachers foster students’ sense of sociopolitical consciousness” (p. 144). Because most teachers come from cultural backgrounds that are different from culturally diverse learners and often lack understanding of how to successfully teach culturally diverse students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995b), there is an urgent need to prepare culturally competent teachers. According to Ladson-Billings (2001), cultural competence occurs in classrooms in which:

- The teacher understands culture and its role in education.
- The teacher takes responsibility for learning about students’ culture and community.
- The teacher uses student culture as a basis for learning.
- The teacher promotes a flexible use of students’ local and global culture (p. 98).

This article presents a collaborative program designed to develop culturally relevant instruction in comprehensive ways.

A major item on the nation's educational agenda is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) issued a national report: *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* that stated:

America's future depends now, as never before, on our ability to teach. If every citizen is to be prepared for a democratic society whose major product is knowledge, every teacher must know how to teach students in ways that help them reach high levels of intellectual and social competence (p.12).

At the same time, attention has focused on the shocking disparities in educational resources and student achievement that distinguish urban areas from suburban areas. National, state, and local efforts have been initiated to close this achievement gap in literacy and other academic areas. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) was authorized in January 2002 to ensure that all children are provided an excellent and equitable education. Teacher education programs across the country have been "grappling" with the issue of the best approach to preparing and supporting teachers who can successfully meet the demands of diverse school populations and improve achievement for all students. The funded research project described in this article proposed to pull together existing components of the teacher preparation program at a Midwestern university to effectively support the goal of producing teachers with the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions to positively impact the learning of all children and to contribute to closing the achievement gap in literacy.

## Overview of the Model

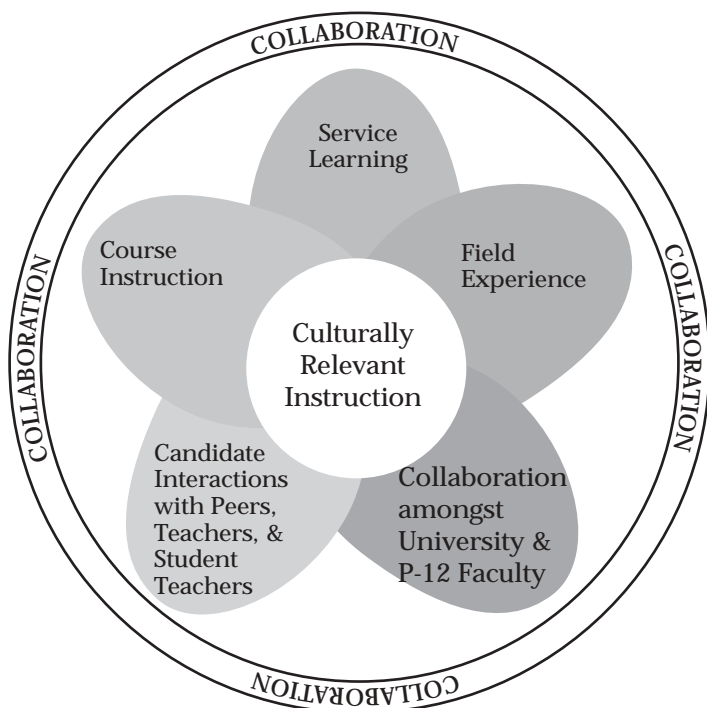
In considering how to best support teacher candidates in learning content literacy approaches that reflect culturally relevant instruction, the decision was made to develop a theory-into-practice model that was comprehensive and multi-faceted. This theory to practice approach was supported by the work of The Holmes Group (1986), a consortium of education deans and chief academic officers from the major research universities in each of the 50 states. Their initial action plan, focusing on the improvement of teacher education, included five goals. One of these goals was to connect institutions to schools:

If university faculties are to become more expert educators of teachers, they must make better use of expert teachers in the education of other teachers, and in research on teaching. In addition, schools must become places where both teachers and university faculty can systematically inquire into practice and improve it (p. 4).

The model (Figure 1) shows that at the core of the program is integration of culturally relevant instruction. Efforts toward this goal involve the collaboration of participants in a variety of activities, thus, collaboration is illustrated as an encompassing factor of the model.

Although each of the elements of this model has wide acceptance in teacher preparation programs, seldom are they combined into a unified effort. This program purposefully combined collaboration between university and P-12 faculty, focused course instruction for teacher candidates, service learning, field experience, and candidate interactions with peers and classroom teachers. The collaborators in this program were university faculty/researchers, teacher candidates enrolled in an undergraduate content reading course, and three fourth-grade teachers and their students from a nearby urban school. The model depicted in Figure 1 integrates these elements with a focus specifically on teacher candidates developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding culturally relevant instruction through a content area

Figure 1. A Collaborative Model for Developing Culturally Relevant Instruction with Preservice Teachers



literacy course. Following is a description of the program components as depicted in the model with both the theoretical basis and a description of the implementation.

## Program Components

The program components included culturally relevant instruction, collaboration amongst university and P-12 faculty, course instruction, service learning, field experience, and candidate interactions with peers, teachers, and students. Collaboration was an essential element of each component of this teacher-training model.

### *Culturally Relevant Instruction*

It is critical that culturally relevant components be integral to teacher education programs. It is widely recognized that the cultural gap between children and teachers in public schools is great and increasing, and the diversity in our public PK-12 schools continues to increase significantly. According to the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004), data reported in 2001-2002 showed that 39% of the public school students in the United States were students of color. According to Futrell, Gomez and Bedden's (2003) discussion of teaching in the "new America," statistical projections have indicated that the percentage of students of color will increase, reaching 51% by 2050. In addition, approximately 25% of children live in poverty. In their call for the preparation of culturally responsive teachers, Villegas and Lucas (2002) noted that more than 1 in 7 children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home, and more than one third of these children had limited proficiency in English.

According to Sleeter and Grant in 2003, over 90% of teachers were White, and this percentage was increasing. Sleeter (2001) reported that the research in this area was limited and that predominantly White institutions have generally not responded to this cultural gap between teachers and students in public schools. She recommended that preservice programs either address the issue by recruiting more teacher candidates from culturally diverse communities or by trying to develop the multicultural knowledge base of predominantly White cohorts of teacher candidates. Sleeter also summarized several studies that focused on the effects of a course plus an urban field experience in a diverse setting on predominantly White preservice students' awareness of multicultural education. The findings were mixed with four studies reporting a positive change and two studies reporting reinforced or more stereotypic attitudes.

Furthermore, there is a significant achievement gap between culturally diverse students and White students. For example, on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) mathematics and reading assessments,

the test scores of African Americans and Hispanics have been consistently and notably lower than those of White students. Research has shown that culturally and linguistically diverse children who often flounder in school, are inadequately prepared for higher education and seek unskilled employment (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004). In spite of this disturbing scenario, there is reason for hope. Many schools are looking for ways to successfully educate all of their students, and many researchers are focusing on the identification of instructional strategies that are effective for educating students from diverse backgrounds.

In preparation for the development of this program, the university researchers also reviewed recent literature on the topic of culturally relevant comprehension instruction. The report of the subgroup from the National Reading Panel (NRP) (National Institute for Literacy, 2000) on comprehension declared that there was a need for greater emphasis in teacher education on the teaching of reading comprehension. This instruction should begin at the preservice level, and it should be extensive, especially with respect to teaching teachers how to teach comprehension strategies. Based on the analyses of 203 studies on instruction of text comprehension, the NRP subgroup identified the following types of instruction that offered a firm scientific basis for concluding that they improve comprehension: (1) comprehension monitoring, (2) cooperative learning, (3) graphic and semantic organizers, (4) story structure analysis, (5) question answering, (6) question generation, (7) summarization, and (8) multiple-strategy teaching in which the reader uses several of the procedures in interaction with the teacher over the text.

In addition to the NRP findings in regard to training teachers how to teach comprehension strategies, for the purposes of this project it was important to consider the research on learning in diverse cultural contexts. Sleeter and Grant (2003) reported that culturally relevant instruction relies on effective communication between the teacher and students. They stated, "The important point is that academic learning can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn the cultural style of the child well enough to connect effectively with the child within the child's zone of proximal development" (p. 50). This consideration was an important component of this program model in regard to culturally relevant comprehension instruction.

The work of the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning (1996) and others working with these children has led to an understanding about how all children learn and more specifically, how language and culture may influence learning. McLaughlin and McLeod (1996) reported on promising instructional approaches connected to culturally relevant pedagogy. One of the most promising instructional approaches to stimulating learning is cooperative learning that benefits cul-

turally diverse students because it requires them to negotiate roles using linguistic and social strategies. Exemplary schools also sought to build on, rather than replace, their students' native languages using students' primary languages either as a means of developing literacy skills, as a tool for delivering content, or both. A thematic approach to curriculum offers several benefits to students with limited background knowledge. This approach focuses on a topic in depth, over an extended period of time, from multiple perspectives and gives these students an opportunity to acquire the necessary background knowledge (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) focused on bridging the differences between home and school cultures and have assisted Arizona teachers in making these connections. This approach was based on the belief that cultures possess "funds of knowledge" that teachers can access to make academic material more relevant to students. Teachers visited students' homes in an attempt to understand their cultural backgrounds as well as gather material for their curriculum. This approach was confirmed by Ladson-Billings (1995a) when she declared that culturally competent teachers utilized students' culture as a vehicle for learning. She noted that school was often perceived by African American students as a place where they could not be themselves.

The importance of teachers' passion for teaching children from diverse cultures and also their high expectations for student achievement is well documented in the literature (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Reeves (2004) reported the findings from research conducted on the Norfolk Public School system, a complex urban system. In spite of dismal achievement scores, teachers and administrators in Norfolk believed their students could improve achievement. This school system demonstrated that the relationship between poverty and student achievement could be negligible. They reduced the achievement gap between White and African American students at three grade levels with the African American group continuing to improve.

Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) also engaged in research with excellent teachers of African American students. Her findings related to effective pedagogy and identified rather routine instructional strategies that were just part of good teaching. She declared that indeed, she was describing good teaching, but the question she raised was, "why so little of it seems to be occurring in the classrooms populated by African American students" (p. 159).

In her discussion of culturally responsive instruction and new literacies, Au (2001) stated that, "cultural responsiveness in literacy instruction can bring students of diverse backgrounds to high levels of literacy by promoting engagement through activities that reflect the values, knowledge, and structures of interaction that students bring from the home" (p. 1). She reported that if these students were to compete with their mainstream peers, their instruction

must take them beyond the basics to higher level thinking with text. Au was concerned that there was a pattern of mandated programs in low-income schools. These programs generally focused on lower-level skills and gave students of diverse backgrounds little opportunity to develop higher-level thinking about text. She supported literature-based instruction that included quality multicultural literature because it built upon the strengths that students brought from their home cultures and fostered higher-level thinking. Bell (2003) supported instruction for culturally diverse students that is more student-centered with the teacher taking a facilitative role. Many of the instructional strategies presented by Moss (2003), Vacca and Vacca (2002), as well as Alvermann and Phelps (2002) and others support the key concepts of culturally relevant instruction because they require collaboration, higher-level thinking, and student centered instruction. These instructional strategies include word sorts and mapping (Moss, 2003), KWL (Ogle, 1986), anticipation guides (Alvermann & Phelps, 2002), semantic mapping (Moss, 2003), discussion webs (Moss, 2003), literature circles (Daniels, 1994), graphic organizers (Vacca & Vacca, 2002), and double-entry journals (Vacca & Vacca, 2002).

These research-based, best instructional practices for culturally diverse students were carefully considered as this collaborative program was developed. In fact, one of the important objectives of this collaborative training model was to support the design and implementation of effective culturally relevant components in the courses comprising the 12-hour reading core required for preservice teachers at a large Midwestern university. The university faculty involved in the program believed that the cultural relevant objective of the program could build on the component of the courses that stresses how to support the reading of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The cultural relevant component was incorporated into the content reading course used in this program by introducing teacher candidates to culturally relevant teaching research and practices investigated and described by Gay (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995a, 1995b).

### *Collaboration Among University and P-12 Faculty*

The importance of collaboration for quality teacher education programs is well documented in the literature. Booth and Rowsell (2002), in their research profiling administrative leadership for establishing successful school literacy environments stated:

Based on research and practice, successful schools have collaborative cultures in which administrators and teachers work as a team with a common commitment to literacy initiatives that ensure success for all. By creating a collaborative culture among educators on a literacy team, it is possible to incite interest in theory, new methodologies, and practices in the area of literacy and language development (p. 19).



Collaboration between colleges of education and local schools is a critical part of teacher preparation. Kramer (1991) reported that "there is almost universal agreement among teachers that what they find useful in their preparatory training is practice teaching and advice from experienced teachers...what they get in the methods courses means little to them until they get into the classroom" (p. 221).

Collaboration encompassed this entire professional development model as illustrated in Figure 1. Participants in this program collaboration included three university faculty members and the project principal investigator, researchers who were studying the effectiveness of the program, and a doctoral student who assisted in data collection and analysis. One of the faculty researchers was also the course instructor.

Twenty-seven teacher candidates enrolled in a required undergraduate content reading course, *Developmental Reading in the Content Area*, 3 fourth-grade teachers from an urban school near the university with self-contained classrooms, and 62 students completed the participant group. Of the 27 teacher candidates, 21 were females and 6 were males; all were White. The teacher candidates consisted of 18 early childhood majors, six middle childhood majors, and three special education majors. Two of the special education majors chose not to participate in the project and therefore did not do their service learning at Urban Elementary (pseudonym), however, they did participate in the field experience at the end of the semester. The 3 fourth-grade teachers were White and female. There were 36 female students and 26 males. Twelve were White, 48 were African American, and 2 were Asian.

Collaboration was also the goal of the staff development portion of this program. The program began with an all-day retreat, at the beginning of the semester, in which the university and school partners established a collaborative relationship. At the retreat the researchers, classroom teachers, and the principal discussed culturally relevant practices and content area literacy strategies that support diverse learners and planned activities to coordinate the undergraduate course with two classroom-based experiences: service learning and field experience to be held at Urban Elementary.

The retreat began with introductions and an overview of the project. Details of case selection, scheduling, data collection, protocols and activities of all stakeholders were discussed and roles and responsibilities were clarified. The faculty researchers shared information about culturally relevant instruction and literacy strategies with the teachers through discussion, handouts, articles, and modeling of some of the strategies. Resources were shared with teachers so that they could select materials and activities to use in their classroom that would support their modeling of culturally relevant teaching. The goals that had been established for the retreat were twofold: to focus on what it meant to deliver culturally relevant instruction using content area lit-



eracy strategies and to work out details for planning and implementing the program. By the end of the day, the retreat participants felt the goals had been met.

The teachers and principal, who had many years of experience at Urban Elementary, shared their knowledge and expertise with the researchers on teaching children from culturally diverse backgrounds and from high poverty homes. They also shared the overall demographics of the school. Of the 388 students enrolled at the time, 70.4% were identified as African American, 3.3% Hispanic, 7.0% Multi-racial, and 15.4% White; 87.7% were considered to be economically disadvantaged. The Title II designation for the school was "Continuous Improvement."

At the conclusion of the day, consensus was reached on the practices and strategies that would constitute the focus of the project. The course instructor agreed to emphasize them. The classroom teachers agreed to incorporate the same culturally relevant practices and reading strategies into their math, science and social studies lessons as the teacher candidates would be taught in the course. The plan was for them to model these strategies during the service learning experience. Ongoing communication among the fourth-grade teachers and university faculty, both face-to-face and via email strengthened the collaborative process throughout the project.

### *The Course Instruction*

The undergraduate course in content reading, one of four reading methods courses required in the teacher preparation program, introduced the teacher candidates to culturally relevant research and practices through assigned readings, discussion, and viewing of a video. They read and discussed an article by Ladson Billings (1995a) on culturally relevant teaching, handouts on culturally relevant instruction, and a chapter from *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 2003). They also viewed and discussed a video that features a teacher demonstrating culturally relevant practices with young African American children.

The content reading course introduced the teacher candidates to the critical role that teachers play in helping students comprehend and respond to information and ideas in text. It provided them with explicit instruction in how they could guide reader-text interactions through strategies and practices and scaffold student learning. The course instructor/researcher modeled effective use of these strategies and discussed how they could scaffold learning for diverse learners by providing explicit instruction and guided practice. For most strategies, the teacher candidates read about the strategy in their textbook, discussed and practiced it with their peers in class, and wrote reflections on how they could adapt the strategy for different grade levels and learning needs.

### *Service Learning*

Service learning is described by the Learn and Serve America Corporation for National Service as a teaching/learning method that connects meaningful, volunteer community service experiences with academic learning. It is an important opportunity for teacher candidates to grow personally, socially, and intellectually. It also enhances citizenship skills preservice teachers need as educators in a multicultural democratic society (Root, 1997).

A benefit of participation in service learning activity often noted in the literature is the development of an ethic of caring (Root, 1997; Wade, 1997). Additionally, Anderson (1998) describes how integrating service learning into teacher preparation programs supports participants developing ability to reflect on practices, particularly with their own teaching, and an awareness of a teacher's varying roles in the classroom. In each of their studies, Siegal (1994) and Stuart (2002) found that students' reflective writing related to service learning experiences revealed not only an understanding of instructional strategies but increased sensitivity to diversity.

As part of this program, service learning involved assignment to one of three fourth-grade classrooms in which the candidates assisted the teacher with instruction for 10 hours during the semester. The purpose of this experience was for the teacher candidates to provide a service to the school and to learn more about culturally relevant practices and reading strategies by seeing them modeled by the teachers. The scheduling of the service learning component also required collaboration. The process began with asking the classroom teachers to identify two-hour blocks of time during the first five weeks of the semester when the teaching of subjects incorporating the identified strategies and activities would be occurring. The next step was to ask the candidates in the reading class to commit to the same time period each week with a specific teacher. No more than two teacher candidates were into each classroom during the two-hour period. This process offered two benefits. First, the teachers knew which candidates would be coming to the classroom at specific times each day. Secondly, the candidates saw the specific strategies being modeled and became familiar with the students and the procedures in the classroom.

During service learning the teacher candidates had an opportunity to observe the teachers model collaborative working relationships, culturally relevant teaching, and content-based reading and writing strategies. The teacher candidates noted what they saw modeled by the teachers in their journals that they kept during service learning and in an online discussion held towards the end of the semester. For example, a number of them described how they had observed the teachers sharing multicultural literature with the children. One candidate said in the online discussion:

I also saw ways that the school supported culturally relevant teaching.

I saw this first by the reading of the book, *Trouble Don't Last*. I thought that it was very interesting that all of the fourth graders were reading this book. From what I observed, the students really seemed to enjoy Mrs. [Parker] read the book.

Accustomed to team teaching with each other, the teachers worked together to design lesson plans that not only embraced new strategies but also complemented and supported the strategies being used in one another's classrooms. For example, each of them used graphic organizers to support student learning, incorporating them into math, science, and social studies content lessons.

The classroom teachers' collaborative relationship and effective planning helped to ease the teacher candidates into the classroom environment when they began their service learning. The teachers met with the university students to discuss the activities they had planned, and then the candidates observed the teachers model the instructional strategies. Having an overview of what they were about to observe, the teacher candidates were able to make sense of what they were seeing and note the teachers' application of strategies and instructional approaches they had read about and discussed in their content reading class, thus helping them link theory to practice.

New to an urban school setting, the teacher candidates were initially cautious and hesitant to become actively involved with the students. Gradually they became more comfortable and confident in the classroom. After a few school visits, they became actively involved in working with students in small groups, reading books to and with them, and assisting them with their assignments. They began to put into practice approaches they had learned about in their classes and seen modeled by the teachers. As they grew more comfortable, they began to probe students for deeper understanding of concepts, and challenge them to expand and deepen their thinking.

After each visit to the site, the teacher candidates reflected upon what they were observing and learning in a journal. After observing one of the fourth-grade teachers communicate expectations of her students in a math class, one teacher candidate wrote in his journal:

By communicating clearly the goals of the lesson, the students can realize what is expected of them and they can begin to construct a schema of what they will learn. They also will be able to activate their prior knowledge because she connected the day's material with the lesson from the previous day. Finally, believing that the students can and will accomplish the goals of the lesson serves to build confidence in the students. . . . in Mrs. [Anderson]'s class they feel valued and that they belong. This is an excellent example of culturally relevant pedagogy.

### *Field Experience*

The field experience, which occurred towards the end of the semester, provided an opportunity for the candidates to apply what they had learned in the course instruction and during service learning to lessons they developed and taught themselves. It involved teaching lessons to small groups of children from the classrooms in which they had done their service learning. The collaborative relationships they formed with the teachers and with each other helped to make this experience successful. During the field experience the teacher candidates also engaged in an online threaded discussion with peers and classroom teachers and reflected on what they were learning. It was clear from the comments they made during this discussion that they greatly benefited from the collaborative relationships they had formed with the teachers.

The teacher candidates participated in the field experience during the last three weeks of the semester. They were matched with two or three fourth graders and taught lessons that focused on application of comprehension strategies to the reading of nonfiction literature. They were encouraged to use the reading strategies and the culturally relevant practices that they had practiced in class and seen applied by the fourth-grade teachers during the service learning component of the course. A number of the candidates commented that they felt more comfortable teaching these strategies because they had been modeled for them. They also were impressed that the children knew exactly what to do with the strategies since the teachers had incorporated them into their daily lessons. One candidate commented in a threaded discussion:

I observed Mrs. [Parker]'s students using anticipation guides, discussion webs, Venn diagrams, and concept maps. When I introduced the KWL chart and Venn diagrams, and concept maps during my lessons, the students were already familiar with them. The strategies really seemed to help the students establish a purpose for reading and focus on the most important parts of the nonfiction text.

After each field experience session, the preservice teachers wrote a summary of their lesson and a reflection that focused on specific questions as listed in Appendix A.

### *Candidate Interactions with Peers, Teachers, and Students*

Recent research supports the use of technology in the form of online discussions to enhance teacher-training programs. This form of asynchronous communication allows teacher candidates time to consider course content and engage in meaningful discourse over time with peers that can result in critical and reflective thinking (Waltonen-Moore, Stuart, Oswald, Varonis & Newton, 2006). The program researchers used asynchronous discussions to promote communication and interaction amongst the teacher candidates and the classroom teachers as well as amongst their peers.

To further develop ideas and “gain a broader perspective of course material” (Knowlton, Knowlton & Davis, 2000, p. 54) after candidates have left a face-to-face setting, technology can be useful in the form of online discussion. Through this medium, referred to as a “bulletin board,” threaded discussion evolves where individuals post messages, read, and reply to the “threads” either at the same time, in “chat room” format, or at a time of their choice, in “asynchronous” discussion. Researchers point to the convenience of the asynchronistic format of online discussions (Liaw & Huang, 2000; Youngblood, Trede & DiCorpo, 2001) where discussants contribute at a time and from a location that best fits their needs as they consider the topic of discussion. Thus, the asynchronistic format was selected for this program and teacher candidates could post their thoughts from home or school at varying times. The asynchronistic discussion is maintained through an online course management system such as Web Course Tools (WebCT), where discussion postings are stored and retrieved by both instructors and learners throughout the duration of the course. Research has shown (Liaw & Huang, 2000) that this form of communication allows the online discussants, both the teacher candidates and classroom teachers in this program, time to engage in critical and reflective thinking.

The use of technology through online threaded discussion was a key element in supporting reflective thinking, discussion and interaction among teacher candidates and the collaborating fourth-grade classroom teachers as well as amongst their peers. The online discussion also provided the teacher candidates feedback from the children they had taught during the field experience. One of the classroom teachers included the comments of her children regarding their reactions to the lessons the candidates had taught them.

The candidates engaged in a threaded online discussion with each other and the collaborating fourth-grade teachers. They were required to think about their experiences, given the prompt shown in Appendix B, and post their ideas to the discussion board during their field experience. This was an asynchronistic discussion where participants could log on at any time and view comments of peers and teachers. The threaded discussion provided them with an opportunity to reflect on what they had learned about culturally relevant pedagogy and comprehension strategies and discuss their thoughts and experiences with their peers and the fourth-grade teachers. It provided a rich context in which the teacher candidates and the classroom teachers shared their enthusiasm for the reading strategies and noted the benefits of using these strategies with the children. One teacher candidate commented during the threaded discussion:

We did a KWL, and anticipation guide on the Moon and solar system and I was wonderfully surprised at how well they understood the usage of the different activities. I think that is a reflection on the teachers

at [Urban Elementary] that they are giving the students better awareness of the learning tools that are available to the students.

## Conclusions and Outcomes

The data collected from classroom observations, student journal entries, and threaded online discussions were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Two program researchers independently analyzed the data collected from the three sources and developed emerging categories relating to culturally relevant instruction. Consistency of themes emerged from their comparison of categories. These themes were then reviewed and agreed upon by additional university program participants. The following conclusions were drawn.

During this program three important phenomena began to surface. First, there was a powerful collaborative relationship amongst the three classroom teachers. The teachers worked together to design lesson plans that not only embraced new strategies using materials purchased to reflect culturally relevant instruction, but also complemented and supported the strategies being used in one another's classrooms. By implication, new ways of looking at reading and literacy learning require on-going professional development (Clay, 1991; Jongsma, 1990; National Institute for Literacy, 2000; Schulman, 1986). The teachers' collaborative efforts provided a supportive setting that allowed them to cultivate and expand their initial use of new instructional strategies and practices. A study conducted by Anders, Hoffman & Duffy (2000) found that teacher support and interactions play an important role in sustaining change to classroom practice. Their findings indicated that when teachers are given the opportunity to work together in the development and use of new strategies, even those teachers who are not initially exposed to the professional training are more likely to make use of new ideas and approaches with their students. The opportunity for the teachers involved in this program to learn and practice the new comprehension strategies during the retreat was instrumental in their successful implementation of these strategies into their practice. In this way collaboration among the staff may be as important as professional development opportunities.

Secondly, the collaborative relationship amongst the three teachers and the research team helped to create an atmosphere in which the teacher candidates flourished. They benefited greatly from having been introduced to strategies and practices in their university course and then seeing them modeled with "real" students in a classroom. The service learning experience not only served to link instructional theory to classroom practice, but also became the teacher candidates' first professional development opportunity. The evidence that emerged from the teacher candidates' online dis-

cussion clearly indicates that they were able to identify and appreciate the components of culturally relevant instruction in which they participated as well as observed in these classrooms. One candidate remarked that the teacher with whom she did her service learning seemed to be a wonderful teacher who “validated the cultural backgrounds of her students.” She stated that the teacher held high expectations for all her students and developed lessons that all her children could relate to from “personal experience” in their lives. This candidate stated that she thought the teacher wanted all her students to succeed and was always attentive to their needs. Another candidate, likewise, had observed a teacher relate to students’ lives by using their “own interests and cultures to guide activities and writing prompts.” She added that by sharing what they knew, the students were able to “express how their culture influences what they know and would like to know.” Another said that Mrs. [Anderson] believes that “culture is central to student learning.” The candidates were also able to identify the importance of cultural backgrounds to students’ comprehension. As one candidate noted, “their culture influences what they know.”

Finally, the students’ relationships with the classroom teachers, teacher candidates, and one another were also noted through the non-participant observations, threaded discussion data and teacher comments. Students picked up on the use of instructional strategies that were used across the grade level and within the various content areas. As they “grappled” with the use of new organizers, they became adept at using the strategies in a variety of formats. As they observed the interactions between teachers and teacher candidates, students emulated the relationships that were modeled for them. The infrastructure within small group activities became less competitive and more collaborative, less territorial and more invitational. This carried over into their relationships with the university students. These student-centered approaches were consistent with culturally relevant instruction.

Teacher candidate interactions with students were initially cautious and hesitant. As students opened up and the teacher candidates became more comfortable within the classroom, their confidence grew. They began to make a shift in the types of responses they accepted during small group interactions. Observations of lessons taught during the field experience indicated that the candidates moved from initially accepting literal responses to questions probing for deeper understanding of concepts, and challenging students to expand and deepen their thinking. Questions moved from the knowledge level to application and synthesis of material.

In the vignette at the beginning of this article, the two fourth graders used their schema about “grappling hooks” to understand how a graphic organizer connects related concepts or ideas. Their schemata of action movies provided a framework for them to organize and access the information the teacher



shared about graphic organizers. It also allowed them to engage in cognitive processing of her explanation in ways that deepened their understanding and helped them to elaborate upon the concept (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). A parallel to this story can be drawn with the teacher candidates who participated in the program described in this article. Through multiple layers of collaboration and multiple opportunities to learn about culturally relevant practices and reading strategies, the teacher candidates' schemata for these concepts were built.

Consistent with the purpose of this program, teacher candidates' experiences in the course and in their interactions with teachers and students at Urban Elementary helped them to deepen their understanding and appreciation of culturally relevant instruction. As one teacher candidate stated in the threaded online discussion:

This experience helped me to grow in my understanding of culturally diverse students. First, it has helped me to realize the importance of social interaction. I believe that the students in Mrs. [Peterson's] class benefit from the opportunities that she provides for them to use cooperative learning. . . . Second, I was able to observe the effects of teacher communication of high student expectations. Mrs. [Peterson] made it clear that she knew that each student could succeed at each activity. This is essential when working with students of diverse backgrounds. I will definitely incorporate these concepts into my future classroom.

As this teacher candidate reflected, this collaborative model supported theory to practice and culturally relevant instruction. This important finding encourages further development of this program and additional research to strengthen teacher education to meet the ever increasing diverse needs of the classrooms of the future. In this collaborative program all stakeholders involved helped to create a culture of collaboration that focused on developing culturally relevant instruction. As a result, both the teachers and the teacher candidates were inspired to explore new methods and practices and felt reaffirmed that many of the practices they had been using positively promoted literacy and language development.

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## Appendix A. Guiding Questions for Lesson Reflection

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Consider the following issues as you reflect on your lesson implementation.

- How did your students respond to the lesson?
- What did they do well?
- What were the challenges for the students?
- How did you incorporate culturally relevant teaching?
- What did you learn about the reading strategies that you used? Were they effective with the students? How so? If not, how did you modify them to try to make them effective?

## Appendix B. Online discussion prompt

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You have been at Urban Elementary for service learning as well as for a field experience. Think about what you have observed, planned, and implemented in connection with effective reading strategies and culturally relevant teaching. Post a response on the course WebCT that explains these reflections. You will also be required to read other postings and respond to at least one on WebCT.

# LITERACY PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES IN AN URBAN SETTING: BUILDING BRIDGES WITH THE SCHOOL, HOME AND COMMUNITY

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## Abstract

*The reading practicum at this urban university, located in the southeast region of the United States, is a supervised experience where graduate students create literacy projects for students, teacher colleagues and the community. It is the capstone course for the graduate degree in reading. As their culminating course, this practicum experience allows the graduate students to create and implement literacy projects as they synthesize, recognize and celebrate their learning in the graduate degree program in reading. The university faculty and on-site supervisors mentor and support the graduate students as they extend themselves beyond their classroom responsibilities and develop into more confident literacy leaders who will meet the roles and responsibilities of the reading specialist as teacher, mentor, coach and resource person (Quatroche, Bean, Hamilton, 2001). This paper details the university graduate reading practicum and provides the practicum scenarios of the three graduate students.*

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*Fulfilling all of the requirements of the practicum in reading at the university was one of the most intimidating academic challenges I have ever faced. It was also one of the most worthwhile. No one was more surprised than myself at what I could accomplish. I came away with a much higher sense of confidence in what I had learned and what I could do both in and out of the classroom. The support of the supervising professors was the key.*

B. Cole, personal communication, October 31, 2004

## Overview

The reading practicum is the capstone course for the graduate degree programs in reading at this urban university located in the southeast region of the United States. The university represents a diverse multicultural and multi-ethnic population of Hispanic, African American, Asian, Haitian, Caucasian and other multi-ethnic peoples. Graduate students matriculating from this program, upon completion of the practicum experience and their degree, are recognized by the local school districts as well-schooled, knowledgeable reading professionals and often become immediately involved as reading specialists within their schools and as they seek employment. In addition to fulfilling the historical role of the reading specialist as one who works with students, the practicum graduates meet the role of and expectations for the evolving role of the reading specialist as one who also "assumes the role of reading coach and mentor" (Dole, 2004, p.464) and takes on an array of roles and responsibilities: instructor, collaborator, resource, student advocate, leader and assessment coordinator (Quatroche, Bean, Hamilton, 2001) depending upon the "context of their instruction" (p. 287).

Just as bridges span a gap or transition for those who journey from one terrain to another, the literacy projects planned and implemented by the graduate students connect each of them with the families and homes of their students, the community at-large, colleagues, administrators, and teachers within their school sites and of course with their own classrooms. As the graduate students extend themselves beyond their classrooms they prepare themselves to meet the challenges that face them as a reading specialist. As the graduate students plan and implement practicum projects, on going reflective practice and discussions with university professors and on-site supervisors cement the graduate students' knowledge and ability to meet the new challenges and expectations.

As the culminating course, the reading practicum includes supervised practical application of the theory learned and expertise developed during the 10 required courses (Appendix B) of the graduate program. It requires the graduate students to demonstrate knowledge and expertise in their classrooms and in their schools in planning and organizing for instruction, utiliz-

ing assessments to enhance instruction and in serving as a literacy resource for teachers and administration at their schools.

## Historical Perspective

The University, founded in 1940, is a private international university with 9,000 students from various states within the United States and 80 countries around the world. The university main campus and off campus sites serve the surrounding urban counties with large multiethnic populations. Additional off campus sites where the graduate degree in reading is offered are located elsewhere in the state. Since 1940, the mission of the university has been to provide a quality education in a nurturing environment. By the 1980s, the graduate reading program had been recognized statewide as a quality program that produces highly qualified teachers of reading whose practice is grounded in research and theory. In a forward thinking mode, in 1987 the graduate reading faculty developed the initial guidelines for what would become the reading practicum and the culminating course for students graduating with a graduate degree in reading. In 1990, the state Department of Education revised its standards for the reading K-12 certification requirements to include a reading practicum, which is still required under the current certification requirements. "Three semester hours in a supervised reading practicum to obtain practical experience in increasing the reading performance of a student(s)" is the statement in the state's Department of Education's memorandum which outlines certification requirements (Ashburn, D.C., 2002, p. 1).

Early in its life as the graduate reading practicum, this course was taught in the university's reading clinic, where young children came for support and remediation with reading, a format that seems typical of other university reading practicum courses even today (Carr, 2003). Just as the content for traditional courses change due to research, trends and best practices, the requirements for practicum has also been influenced. The current demand and need for highly qualified reading professionals in schools and districts further brings to the forefront the importance of the work done in the university's graduate reading practicum by its students.

## Background

In a recent national survey, Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis (2002) asked "What do Reading Specialists really do?" (p. 736). Responses to that survey described the multiple roles and responsibilities of reading specialists to include instruction, assessment, resource for teachers and the school, and acting as assistant for administrative tasks as needed. Additional noteworthy comments from a review of research on the role of the reading specialist suggest there are different views and perceptions of the role of the

reading specialists. High school principals see a reading specialist as one who works with content teachers while also taking responsibility for assessment and instruction with at-risk readers. "Middle and secondary teachers expect the reading specialist to function as a specialized resource person;" (Quatroche, Bean, Hamilton, 2001, p. 285) while elementary teachers view the reading specialist as a "support person." The same review reports a survey where reading specialists were asked their "most pressing need," to which they responded "more information . . . more in-service education . . . on their role as a resource," (p. 283) and suggests ways in which the "reading specialists can and should function" (p.289).

Jaeger (1996) and Henwood (1999/2000) described how the reading specialist can assume the role of a collaborative consultant through her or his impact on curriculum development, instructional problem solving, and parent liaison work. For example . . . the reading specialist can offer resources to teachers . . . (do) demonstration lessons and provide on going staff development. (p. 290)

These comments and suggestions evoke the recommendations of Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) who state that "every school should have access to specialists . . . reading specialists who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to (the) classroom teacher" (p. 333). Additionally, these expectations for the reading specialist comply with the Standards for Reading Professionals as developed by the International Reading Association in 2003. The university's graduate reading practicum provides the graduate students with the opportunity to discover and experience facets of these many roles.

A survey of the literature related to "graduate reading practicum" reveals a limited range of articles and research. The practicum experiences described in the literature are field-based situations where undergraduate students, as interns, are placed in classrooms with experienced teachers who act as mentors (Bean, 1997) or where university clinic programs are manned by graduate reading students (Carr, 2003). Less typical is the practicum experience where a working teacher and an at-risk reader are paired in a school district sponsored professional development setting in which both teacher and child are learning reading strategies together (Peterson & VanDerWege, 2002). In the articles reviewed there are noticeable differences in the time requirement for the practicum experience as well as variety in the content of the practicum courses.

Bean (1997) describes the reading practicum as part of the pre-service teachers' activity in a content area reading course where students were required to participate in a "one-day-per week observation-participation practicum" (p. 155) in a secondary classroom. The practicum covered a five day



period within their content reading course. Afterwards, the students were interviewed about the literacy strategies they selected and implemented during their practicum field work. Carr (2003) describes a six week summer university program where K-10 at risk students attended weekly two hour daily sessions in a clinical setting. The graduate reading practicum students were assigned "two students for observation, assessment and instruction" (p.257). At the end of the six weeks the graduate reading practicum students were asked to evaluate their own literacy training and the practicum experience. Peterson and VanDerWege (2002) describe the Primary Literacy Institute as an "essential teaching practicum for practicing teachers" (p. 438). The institute brings together working teachers and struggling readers who work together one-on-one, every morning, in a two week institute, where each learn best practices in reading. In the afternoon the working teachers discuss what they have "just learned with real children" (p.439) and study assessment and observation procedures. The one component these referenced practicum experiences share with the university graduate reading practicum is the opportunity to interact with university supervisors and other mentor teachers on an ongoing basis throughout the practicum situation.

The focus of the graduate reading practicum at the university is to develop highly qualified professionals and practitioners in the field of reading who will meet the challenge of the evolving role identified for reading specialists as collaborators and consultants (Jaeger, 1996; Henwood, 1999/2000). Dole (2004) along with Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis (2002) confirm that this evolving role is the current expectation for the reading specialists who enter today's schools and school districts. The university graduate reading program meets this expectation with the first course and continues throughout the coursework, culminating in the practicum and its required projects.

The university's graduate reading practicum is a full semester, three-credit course, 16 weeks in length. The practicum students, for the most part, are working teachers who implement their practicum project ideas within their own K-12 classrooms, school settings and school communities. Approximately three percent of the graduate students teach at the community college or other post-secondary level. For graduate students who have careers outside the continental United States, practicum requirements are completed in local schools and educational institutions near the campus at a site that is deemed appropriate for their future work. For example, one graduate student will be working for the Ministry of Education when she returns to her home country. At the request of her minister of education, she will develop and implement a program for improving reading instruction within her country. While completing her graduate reading practicum at the university she was able to plan and implement ideas pertinent to this future work in a local private elementary school.

In response to the needs and demands of the profession, the graduate reading practicum requires practices and activities which extend beyond the graduate student's classroom. As the role of the reading specialist evolves (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, Wallis, 2002; Dole, 2004; Henwood, 1999/2000; Jaeger, 1996) to include mentor, resource person, and administrative assistant, the expectations for the graduate reading students in the practicum have changed. Appendix D represents a listing of typical practicum projects that illustrates this changing expectation. During their practicum course, the graduate reading students implement projects at their school sites and communities which meet the growing literacy needs and demands, whether these needs are instructional or informational. It is through this work that the graduate students build the bridges which will become the literacy partnerships within and beyond the school.

## The Practicum Process

Over time, the practicum has been continually refined, changed and improved, in small ways, based on student and faculty input, shared experiences, research and school community expectations and the requirements of the state. However, the foundation of the practicum experience, mentoring and coaching by university professors and on-site supervisors, has not changed. The reading practicum is a model in mentoring and coaching partnerships. The student succeeds by partnering with their practicum supervisor from the university and their on-site supervisor. The graduate reading practicum experience is facilitated through a series of seminars with much discussion, individual face to face meetings, demonstrations, on-site observations and electronic communication. As a result, the graduate student successfully integrates research based course content to implement field-based projects which demonstrate teaching knowledge, skills and leadership.

## Practicum Requirements

As is true of most capstone courses, the graduate reading practicum provides students with the opportunity to practice what they have learned during the process of their graduate program. The graduate student is expected to develop three literacy projects based on the needs of their school site, as well as their own interests. Two projects are "short term", generally one-time events such as a workshop for colleagues or a parent informational meeting. The third is the major project, to be implemented for a minimum of six to eight weeks (Appendix A).

The graduate student may implement the planned projects within the school day; during, before or after school meetings and workshops, or in the evening. Projects are diverse, including such activities as these: conducting

parent and/or faculty workshops, writing columns for newsletters, developing school-wide or classroom newsletters, organizing action research projects in classrooms, developing school-wide reading days, peer tutoring projects, developing reading buddy programs, after school books clubs, creating professional study groups, or implementing proven classroom literacy activities, which are directed, instructional and engaging. Students keep a log of their project hours. It is not unusual to see logs with many more than the required 125 hours utilized for researching planning, thinking and implementing.

Before implementation, projects are discussed collaboratively with both university and on-site supervisors and agreed upon by the graduate student, school administration, on-site supervisor and university professor. Discussions occur during a series of usually five group seminars, where graduate students present their practicum plans and projects at a forum with their classmates with opportunities for interaction and questions. Many discussions are held during one-on-one conversation with supervisors or peers.

University supervisors use collaborative coaching and mentoring principles as the graduate students' projects tend to provide a professional "stretch" for the graduate student, who often, like the students in their classrooms, must feel safe in what might be a real at-risk situation for them as educators. The university professors, as supervisors of the planning and implementation of the projects, recognize that their students are "continuous learners" (Costa, A. L. & Garmston, R. J., 2002) and provide opportunities for growth by listening to out-loud planning and encourage students through on-going feedback, supportive suggestions and reflective comments. University faculty supervisors and on-site supervisors benefit from the fresh ideas and creative thinking of the graduate students, as well as from the opportunity to be in different school environments. Therefore, practicum is also an opportunity for all participants to grow professionally.

For example, one graduate student, a teacher of retained third grade students, wanted to use the "Literature Circles" model as her major practicum project during supplemental reading time in her classroom. Her planning for this project required research via the Internet and published resources as well as discussion with colleagues and the university supervisor. Also, both her school administrator and on-site supervisor had to be receptive as the graduate student presented her plan to them for approval. Her administrator's major concern was that this project would take away reading and language time from these students who needed to prepare for the upcoming state assessment. The administrator was finally "sold" on the idea because of its "heavy use of students' conversation with their peers in depth." The administrator agreed that the dialog among students about the literature they read was "indeed good practice" for the state test (S. Hunter, personal communication, June 26, 2005).

The graduate reading practicum evaluation process has a number of aspects. The university supervising professor visits the school/community site to observe the graduate student implementing a project, using an observation form developed by the graduate reading faculty (Appendix C). Additionally, a practicum notebook is compiled by the graduate student. This notebook includes documentation of *all* projects, along with reflective writing for each project from planning to completion, along with artifacts. All students make oral presentations about their projects at the final practicum seminar. Students' comments reflect how positively they feel about what they accomplish during their practicum experience. The opening quote from a recent graduate confirms that the practicum initially was an "intimidating academic challenge" but built a "higher level of confidence." (B. Cole, personal communication, October 31, 2004). Another graduate reading student commented:

I work in a migrant workers' community, where parents sometimes feel at a loss regarding school matters, mainly due to their own lack of preparation. My practicum project allowed me to acknowledge the importance of their role as parents, regardless of their own literacy levels, and to show them ways in which they can help their children succeed at school. In an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation for their contributions, I was able to empower the parents in my community to enrich the reading experiences of the students I teach. (C. Paula, personal communication, October 14, 2004)

This multidimensional form of evaluation, with its opportunity for continuous reflection and supportive feedback creates a positive atmosphere which tends to develop confident practitioners who are encouraged and empowered to extend themselves beyond their classrooms to achieve their professional goals

## Specific Practicum Components

One university faculty member typically supervises from seven to fifteen practicum students a semester. During the first seminar meeting, which is held *before* the semester begins, the students receive a practicum syllabus with supporting materials. The material specifies that the practicum is a practical field-based experience, not a research study (although it may include this), nor a clinical experience (although it may involve aspects of this) (See Appendices A and D). During the first two weeks of the semester, the practicum student is expected to develop draft ideas for their projects and discuss those projects with the university faculty member and the on-site supervisor. The syllabus provides ideas for the minimum of two short literacy projects/activities requirements and the one major literacy project/activity. Such ideas include the following: literacy workshop for parents, faculty or community

or some combination; develop and submit a program proposal for a professional conference; draft and submit an article for a journal; plan and implement innovative “best practice” reading activities for the classroom; and plan and implement a school wide literacy activity. As previously mentioned, students submit a practicum notebook which must include an introduction or overview, a summary of projects, a reflection log, students’ work sample and/or artifacts, and participants’ evaluations. It also may include a review of related literature, an outline of the projects, handouts, newsletters, copies of websites, a description of activities, photographs, video and/or audio tapes.

## Student Presentations of Practicum Experiences

Three recent graduates were asked to present their practicum projects during a presentation at the 48th Annual College Reading Association Conference in October, 2004. The three represented elementary, middle school and high school and each held a different educational position in their school setting. Each of these graduates teach in the fifth largest school district in the nation, which is directly north of the university’s main campus. The school district includes more than 274,000 K-12 students who represent 161 countries and speak 56 languages. The school district refers to its student population as having a “unique urban/suburban mix of students” (retrieved April, 15, 2005, from <http://www.browardschools.com>.)

The following is a summary of the practicum projects each graduate Reading student chose to share.

### *MG’s Story*

MG is a first-grade teacher in a self-contained regular classroom. She is responsible for all subjects in her multicultural, multilingual classroom. She refers to her students as “my babies.” Her students are considered poor readers, based on their standardized assessment scores, but run the range of below-to on-grade level readers. She combined for her long-term project the activities called “buddy reading” and “cross grade reading.”

She approached a second grade teacher colleague who agreed that her second graders would be allowed to read to MG’s first graders. MG, with the support of the second grade teacher and her on-site supervisor, developed an eight week program where second graders went to her classroom daily for half an hour and read aloud, easy, predictable books, to the first graders. The project not only required the cooperation of the school, but MG needed to locate books that the second graders could read easily. In addition, MG not only provided instruction about the anticipated reading behavior of first graders, she also taught the second graders about classroom behavior. She did this by modeling reading behavior and explicit instruction about classroom behavior through “what if” scenarios. She wanted the second graders

to read aloud and the first graders to listen and comment. She did not want the second graders to *teach* reading to the first graders.

She reported some initial challenges, but as the second graders began to read aloud for longer and longer times, the first graders' attention spans increased. Children were observed sprawled over small tables each with their noses and fingers in books, one listening, one reading with excitement; both pointing and exclaiming. Sometimes, the first graders read to the second graders.

As the project finished, MG reported in her reflection and orally:

Next time I'll use older students; these were too close in age. But it was amazing to see their attitudes about reading change. They were more positive about reading on their own and showed that they felt better about their reading, more successful. They also selected books to read during times when they used to play.

### *DH's Story*

DH is a middle-school reading teacher. His project was implemented in his eighth grade reading classroom of Level 1 readers (lowest score on the state's reading assessment). His job was to "teach them how to read better." He hoped to do this through the use of literature circles (Daniels, 2001). This project would allow groups of students to read together, generally novels, and respond to the readings through a specific format procedure. In addition, each member group was responsible for a set of varied activities. The group leader, who changed weekly, was responsible for reporting the group's consensus response to a question DH had posed about the book. The plan seemed simple, but required an organized, researched procedure that could be adapted for students who had never read novels.

Before developing this project, which was held during the third grading quarter of the school year, DH needed approval from his school's administrator and his on-site supervisor. Also, before implementation, DH needed to select the process and the procedures as well and the books for his students. The work of Harvey Daniels (2001) was his first resource for learning about literature circles. But DH soon discovered that the Internet is full of ideas, resources, and plans for developing the literature circle concept and process. He was able to select and adapt material to fit his students' needs. The first thing he did was to conduct book talks about the novels which he thought might pique the interest of his non-readers. Walter Dean Meyers was an author who appealed to his students. DH selected novels of a similar genre, in addition to the more classic type adolescent novel. His students selected four novels from DH's collection. The students were then placed into Literature Circles based on their personal novel selection.

Next, DH trained his students on the individual roles for literature circles

participants, such as discussion leader, illustrator, word wizard, and connection maker. The actual reading activity did not begin until each student understood the expectations and could demonstrate the roles in each literature circle group. When the university supervisor observed this project, the students participated in a self directed opening activity as a class and then broke into their individual literature circles. Each group read a different novel. Each member of each separate novel group participated according to his/her role, as the four novel groups read and discussed their books. The groups worked collaboratively, with active discussions, enthusiasm and interest. As the circle work began, the leader discussed whether or not the circle would read (the books were read in class) aloud or silently and in what manner; jump in reading, as a read aloud, or for a timed period. After the reading time was finished, the discussion leader led the circle members through their individual roles and the groups continued to respond.

In DH's final discussion and reflection of this process, he noted that his students read and discussed a novel, many for the first time. They were fully engaged and articulated their reactions and their interests. DH's final assessment is that the literature circle process, when organized in a structured way where students understand their roles, responsibilities and tasks, promotes reading improvement.

### *BC's Story*

BC once had been a high school social studies teacher, whose usual assignment was the honors or AP classes. By the time she began the practicum, she was a reading teacher in an inner city high school with the lowest state reading assessment scores in the county. BC selected as a project the idea of creating a professional study group to be implemented with her peers (Professional Study Groups, 2001). A professional study group sometimes, to the outsider, might appear to have the format often seen in literature or book club group, but in actuality it is a structured approach to reading and discussing a work of professional literature with the purpose of implementing change within a school department program or class.

The professional literature is often selected because it addresses a particular need of the school's student population or faculty professional development, based on input from data. It was hoped that, as a result of the reading and discussion, the group's members would become agents of resource and change in their school.

BC selected *When Kids Can't Read—What can Teachers Do* by Kylene Beers (2002). Her choice was based on the low reading scores of the high school's student population and lack of knowledge about literacy instruction generally seen in high school content area teachers. She followed the format provided in the *Professional Study Groups* guide developed for ETS



by the Region XIV Comprehensive Center (2001). With the support of her principal and her on-site supervisor, BC invited all the members of her large high school faculty to participate, expecting to collect up to 10 interested teachers and/or administrators. Four teachers responded, each from a different content area.

Undaunted, BC began facilitating the project by introducing the book and explaining the purpose, method and task of the Professional Study Group (PSG). The most difficult task when facilitating a PSG is maintaining commitment and sustaining momentum. BC hoped to conquer this by assigning one section of reading and scheduling a time for coming together weekly for a lively directed discussion. However, given the busy schedules of all the members, finding time to discuss was difficult. Yet, the book's message and content sparked the interest of the small group of four educators and this maintained commitment. Over time and because this group had bonded around the Beers book, BC's PSG formed into a group of interested professionals discussing the potential impact, for their high school, of ideas presented in the book. They shared their own ideas stimulated by the discussion and common goal. They scheduled their meetings to coincide with dinner outside of the school and each member took a responsibility, which supported facilitating the next meeting. They set purpose, created a log and developed individual tasks to be shared and developed to enhance the next meeting's reading and discussion.

In BC's final reflections and discussion, she emphasized the power of the PSG process and its impact on the group's members. Each member of this small group sustained their interest based on a common commitment to improving the literacy of their own students, regardless of content area. Five educators in one large urban high school, who otherwise would not have known each other or ever worked together, bonded around this common commitment and interest. Each teacher changed instructional practices in her classroom in an attempt to implement suggestions found in the Beers book. BC and the PSG are proud to continue this project during the upcoming new school year.

Each of the three graduate reading practicum students achieved a new reading positions (reading leader, reading coach) in their school in the fall following their practicum experience and graduation.

## Conclusion

Clearly, the role of the reading specialist has changed and continues to change and evolve according to the needs of a school and its administrators, as well as the demands of the policy makers and the law. Through the graduate reading practicum, graduate students extend themselves beyond the class-



room to interact with other school personnel and the community surrounding the school to bring knowledge and expertise about reading and literacy. In addition, through the opportunity to bridge with various constituencies, they reflect on their work and their opportunities, and are ultimately prepared to be the flexible literacy professional needed to fill the demands of today's highly qualified reading expert.

The graduate reading practicum experience requires the graduate student to research, create, develop and implement projects as a culmination of what they have learned in their graduate reading program. As the capstone course during their graduate studies, the reading practicum asks students to develop and implement projects from inception to conclusion. Each of the three projects presented in this article represents a growth experience, a new process and a new product. For the graduate reading student, the end result is reiterated by these reflective comments:

No one was more surprised than I at what I could accomplish. I came away with a much higher sense of confidence in what I had learned and what I could do both in and out the classroom (B. Cole, personal communication, October 31, 2004).

In an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation for their contributions, I was able to empower the parents in my community to enrich the reading experiences of the students I teach (C. Paula, personal communication, October 14, 2004).

For graduate students at all levels in the field of education, knowing that they can and do make a difference in the life of a student for an hour or for a day, a week or a lifetime is what their mission is all about. This experience, which empowers teachers, ultimately leads to thoughtful, powerful teaching.

## Future Study

Former students in the reading practicum are currently being surveyed to determine the impact their graduate work has had on their professional lives. They were asked which courses were most helpful and why for their daily practice, the issues that impact them on a daily basis as they teach literacy, and how they deal with the issues.

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## Appendix A: Required Projects for the Graduate Reading Practicum

### Description of assignments, field/clinical experiences

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The Practicum student, with guidance from the course instructors, will complete

1. EDU 717 *Project Areas* form with the area categories:
  - Minor Projects -a minimum of two short projects in the Reading projects/activities categories and
  - Major project—one major literacy activity project

Each project *must* include the following:

- a summary and/or
- a reflective log and/or
- overview
- samples of students' work (as appropriate) submitted in a scholarly format.

The projects *may* include the following (as appropriate):

- a review of related literature
- an outline
- handouts
- a description,
- photographs, and/or audio and videotapes

2. The project activities will be planned and implemented according to the specifications developed between the university instructors and the student, organized for presentation, and submitted to the instructors in a Practicum notebook. *At least one project must have an assessment component.* There should be a minimum of 125 hours of activities and work involved in the Practicum. *The record of hours should be kept in a log and totaled and signed by the on-site supervisor before the final submission of the Practicum notebook.*
  3. Plan and implement at least one of the practicum activities, to include literacy workshop for parents, faculty or community; a program proposal for a conference; or a draft for a professional journal article. If you are your school's reading leader/coach/specialist, and already conduct workshops, you should do one of the latter two options.
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Appendix B: MS in Reading - Required courses for the 30 semester hours (a 16 month program).

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(Results in a MS in Reading and the state Reading certification)	
EDU 567	Foundations of Reading
EDU 568	Reading in the Content Areas
EDU 601	Methodology of Research
EDU 584	Reading Diagnosis
EDU 590	Corrective Reading
EDU 517	Evaluation & Measurement in Education <i>(Required for certification if another tests and measurements course has not been previously taken.)</i>
OR	
EDU 613	Methods for the Reading Resource Teacher
EDU 535	Teaching Language Arts
EDU 607	Beginning Reading for Primary Grades
OR	
EDU 718	Developmental Reading
EDU 554	Literature for the Classroom <i>For students who do not had a prior course in children's or adolescent literature, required for Reading certification</i>
Take and pass the state Reading subject area exam	
EDU 716	Advanced Diagnosis and Remedial Reading
EDU 717	Practicum in Reading

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Note: Other reading elective courses are sometimes taken.

### Appendix C: A Sampling of Graduate Reading Students' Practicum Projects

Student	Project Scope:	Project
JR	Major: School wide	Developed and implemented a series of workshops for a young mothers' group called "Mommy and Me"—Workshops focused on early literacy and literacy acquisition of young children
CP	Minor: Other	Developed an article for an educational journal—focus African American children Literature
MG	Major: School wide	Cross grade reading project—Buddy Reading 2nd graders read with first grade at risk students
SD	Minor: Community	Informational session (in the evening) to inform parents about the statewide testing program and expectations of the assessment as well as helpful hints to make the assessment day successful for the student
CB	Major: Home and Community	Worked with a large, local bookstore to take over their story time on Saturdays. Prepared handouts for parents on literacy, did story telling, read alouds and supervised after reading enrichment activities with children (6 weeks).
MR	Minor: Community	Planned and publicized a book drive at school to collect books to be sent to schools that had suffered from a natural disaster and needed materials. Over 1,000 books were collected and sent.
CD	Minor: School wide	Developed a school wide (all grades) project for all students who wished to read a single novel and then participate in a celebration meal and a book talk... 50 students school wide participated
JE	Minor: Other	Surveyed community college faculty who teach developmental reading. Submitted a proposal to present at a state reading conference (accepted).
CDD	Major: Home	Developed a "backpack project" where primary children would take backpacks of books and activities home for the week end, read to their parents and do activities and games with their parents over the week end
JRR	Major: Other	Developed an article based on a scientifically based survey, surveyed her constituents and submitted the article. It was published in a state wide reading publication
KM	Major: School wide	Instituted a "lunch bunch" reading program implemented the Literature Circles process with HS juniors during their lunch time, met daily for 6 weeks



